









# Paystation

ISSUE 60 OCTOBER 2011

Official Magazine - Australia

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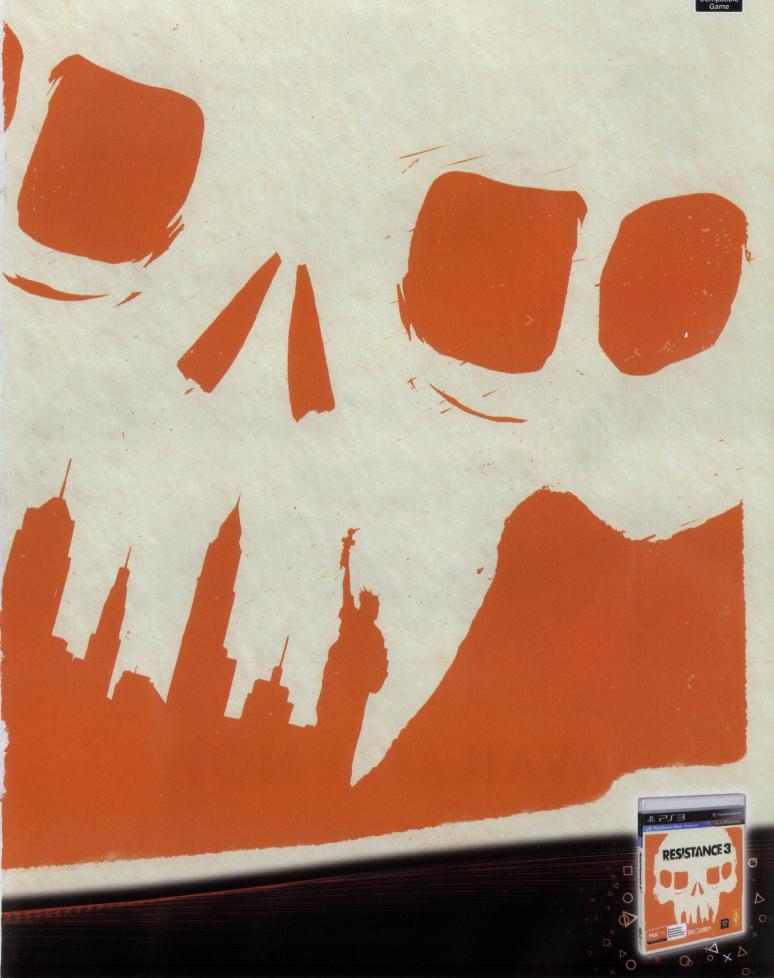






PlayStation 3





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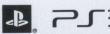


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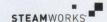
















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The most fun you'll ever have in a coma. Or, at least, we think so. None of us have been in one before.

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Are consoles really going the way of the dodo?

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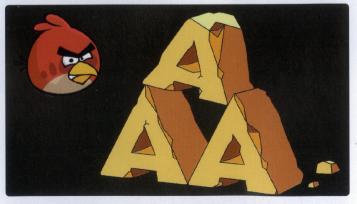
2011 is not a good year to release a turkey of a shooter..





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We book a ticket to the island and kick back in this gore-lovers paradise. Join us as we test out our zombie escape plans.



#### 58 Mobile vs. Console

Is the rise of mobile gaming really a threat to the triple A games we love, or is all this talk just a bunch of hot air?



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Power armour is our most favourite of all armours. But how likely are we of owning some?





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#### In Reality

We see how likely it is to score some sweet power armour.

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to wear shades

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Subscribe NOW! Call 136 116 See page 34 for details ▶

#### Meet the team



**Paul Taylor** Deputy Editor

Bye Reills! Does this mean I get to sit in the big boy's chair, and get a new photo? Playing: Deus Ex: Human Revolution

Wanting: Dishonored



#### Stephanie Goh **Art Director**

Bye Luke! Here's hoping the new guy is half as awesome (and likes chocolate).

Playing: Uncharted 2: Among Thieves

Wanting: AC: Revelations



#### Adam Mathew

#### **Associate Editor**

End (and start) of an era. You have been and always shall be, OPS editor and my friend. \*Vulcan salute\*. Playing: Driver: SF

Wanting: Mass Effect 3



#### **James Cottee**

Contributor

I think Bethesda's lawvers need to lay off Notch and take a Chill Pill.

Playing: Portal 2 Wanting: Batman: Arkham City



#### James Ellis Contributor

I've been composing my Ode to Lucozade and several related Haikus. Bye big fella!

Playing: FIFA 12 Wanting: Skyrim



#### **Nathan Lawrence**

#### Contributor

Reinforcing the sacred mantra, 'A headshot a day keeps the n00bs away'. Also, I'm in Germany,

Playing: Battlefield 3 Wanting: Uncharted 3



#### Dave Kozicki Contributor

What am I up to? Battlefield 3 multiplayer. I want to have sex with you. I'll even snuggle afterwards I swear!

Playing: Driver: SF Wanting: The Baconing



#### **Toby McCasker**

#### Contributor

Luke's leaving and I'm a bit sad about it. It's like the end of Final Fantasy X where Tidus disappears, \*Sniff\*

Playing: Xena: WP Wanting: Luke back



#### **Angry Sackboy** Contributor

Luke Reilly? Sure, I think I knew him once. Heard he died in a grease fire, or something. Yeah. That guy.

Playing: CoJ: The Cartel Wanting: Reparations

## **Editorial**



hen I was a teenager, instead of studying. I played a lot of Driver. I played it so much I'm pretty sure I killed our family's TV. It was one of those old ones: it had wood panelling and I think the remote control was powered by mice. Also you had to tune the PlayStation into it, like a VCR. Remember that? Scanning for those two white lines. I hated that.

I'm pretty sure I saw the Berlin Wall come down on this TV so it was probably

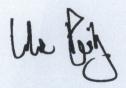
on the way out anyway. My Driver sessions proved to be the straw that broke the camel's back.

Oddly enough, well over a decade later, while playing the Driver: San Francisco a crucial piece of electronics crapped out on me again. In this case it wasn't my TV, rather our PS3 test console. As you'd expect our test consoles get punished. After four years of being on more than it was off, plus countless train rides and courier trips, it's hardly surprising. It's hardly tragic either: a PS3 – debug or otherwise – is just a machine and machines can be repaired. I did have to start the game from scratch though, on another debug. The universe is kooky sometimes.

This brings me to my next point, as I myself will be starting from scratch again elsewhere. After around 90 issues of OPS2 and OPS. going from freelancer to editor, it's time for me to punch out for a new opportunity. As my first job that didn't require me to wear a name tag this magazine will always be special to me.

When I was popping into the newsagency each month back in the late '90s and early 2000s I certainly never would've guessed that I'd one day be the editor of my favourite magazine. It's been an incredible ride and I've had an incredible bunch of people to work with. Of course, I owe it all to you, the readers. If you weren't buying and enjoying the magazine I'd have been back stacking DVDs or digging holes years ago. Thanks for all your support. I'll be one of you again, starting next month. Maybe I'll start sending letters to the new editor.

I'll end with a confession. That signature, below? It's my fake magazine signature. My real one looks like the kind of mark you make on a page when you want to test if a pen is working. I'm glad I got that off my chest.



Luke Reilly Editor

Playing: Driver: San Francisco Wanting: Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception

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#### SPEAK WITH US!

Love the mag? Hate the mag? We want your opinions and questions on OPS, on games on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:



Post OPS Feedback, Citrus Media, PO Box 20154, World Square, NSW 2002

E-Mail ops@citrusmedia.com.au Twitter: www.twitter.com/OPS\_Aus Facebook: www.facebook.com/



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#### PlayStation.

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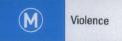
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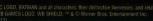
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Special thanks: Vinnie :: Nicole :

# EVERYTHING AT STAKE. EVERYONE AT RISK.







# insider

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# Two steps forward, two steps back

Our games industry rises to the challenge and gets itself "right-sized"

Recently, the Australian games industry made two momentous leaps forward. The first was the in-principle agreement for an R18+ rating, the second was improved R&D tax credit legislation for small-to-medium businesses.

Regarding the former, while NSW Attorney-General Greg Smith abstained from voting on an R18+ rating for videogames during the SCAG meeting in July (where all the remaining Attorneys-General finally agreed in-principle to the rating). Smith has since formally stated that he too will give his in-principle support to an R18+ rating for games in Australia. The next step for all the Attorneys-General is to work on the revised guidelines discussed at the SCAG meeting.

According to those who lobbied hard for the latter, this \$1.8 billion research and development tax break would have the potential to turn Australia into a booming mecca of game development.

"News of the tax reform has already attracted the interest of many global game publishers," Ron Curry, CEO of the Interactive Games and Entertainment Association (IGEA) told us, soon after the reform was passed. "Globally there's a lot of competition, partcularly with paces like Canada, where its government is working to support its gaming industry. So its nice to have the chance to bring opportunities to Australia."

While there's little doubt that the R&D Tax Credit was quite the coup, the local enthusiasm for the legislation wasn't enough to impress multinational videogame publisher THQ. Unfortunately the publisher has decided to cull two of its development studios in Australia: Blue Tongue Entertainment in Melbourne and THQ Studio Australia in Brisbane.

Both teams were associated with popular franchises — with Blue Tongue having developed the de Blob series and the Brisbane studio handling the Avatar: The Last Airbender IP.

Blue Tongue opened its doors way back in 1995 — publishing AFL Finals Fever — and caught THQ's eye for a November 2004 acquisition. The THQ Brisbane studio had been formed one year earlier and had a long history in developing games based

around Nickelodeon franchises

"By right-sizing our internal development capacities for our console portfolio, our five internal studios are focused on delivering high-quality games with talented teams driving the execution of those titles to market," said Brian Farrell, President and CEO, THQ in a globally issued statement. "As we have outlined in our business strategies, we are making shifts to reduce movie-based and licensed kids' video games in our portfolio, which underscores our strategy to move away from games that will not generate strong profits in the future."

This sad news comes off the back of a rumour suggesting that beleaguered Aussie developer, Team Bondi, will be closing its doors. According to an inside source, the studio will be selling off its IP and other assets in a plan to be absorbed by George Miller's Sydney-based production studio, Kennedy Miller Mitchell (KMM). According to the same source, the remaining staff members at Team Bondi have been offered jobs at KMM. KMM is thought to be working on the rumoured Mad Max game.



#### In Short

A brief look at this month's news



- ▶ The next title from developer Goichi "Suda51" Suda's Grasshopper Manufacture is called Lollipop Chainsaw. It's about a cheerleader named Juliet who just so happens to be a zombie slayer armed with a chainsaw.
- ▶ PS3 price drop confirmed for Australia: \$349.95RRP for the 160GB and \$449.95RRP for the 320GB, effective now.
- A new **Batman: Arkham City** trailer has unveiled Mr. Freeze.
- According to WB Interactive President Martin Tremblay, **Mortal Kombat** has already paid for all of the assets acquired from Midway by selling "close to" three million units worldwide. How many of those were smuggled into Australia? More than a few, we imagine.
- Ridge Racer Unbounded will introduce a "City Creator" feature, allowing players to lay out their own environments.
- Tommy, from the original *Prey*, will play ar "integral" role in *Prey 2*'s plot.
- ▶ THQ has decided "not to actively pursue further development" of the once-decent MX vs ATV franchise.
- ▶ Take-Two CEO Strauss Zelnick has told investors that, despite its disappointing reviews, *Duke Nukem Forever* has been profitable for the company.
- Sony will release **SingStar Back to the 80s**
- **▶ Battlefield 3** will have 10 times the unlocks as Battlefield: Bad Company 2.
- **Borderlands 2** has been announced.
- Adam Levine, lead singer of Maroon 5, is suing Activision for inappropriate use of his likeness in 2009's Band Hero. Levine claims he didn't give Activision permission to use his likeness with other songs. Activision lost a similar case to No Doubt in 2010.
- ▶ Batman: Arkham City's new London gangster Penguin is reportedly actually voiced by Nolan 'Nathan Drake' North. Crazy.
- ▶ Twisted Metal has been delayed until early 2012
- ▶ UK-based publisher Reef Entertainment has acquired the rights to **Rambo** and plans to produce "triple-A" Rambo games for PS3 and other platforms.
- 2K Games has confirmed that the likes of Julius Erving (Dr. J) and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar will be appearing alongside Michael Jordan, Magic Johnsor and Larry Bird in NBA 2K12. These Hall of Famers will feature in a new "NBA's Greatest" mode (similar to last year's Jordan Challenge), where players can relive classic moments using 15 classic NBA teams.
- In welcome news Square Enix has picked up **True Crime: Hong Kong** from Activision, so we WILL actually get to play it.
- Sony has acquired inFamous developer, adding Sucker Punch Productions to its impressive list of first party studios
- Call of Duty: Black Ops has sold 25 million copies. Modern Warfare 2 has sold 22 million.
- Put down the magazine right now and type **The Ballad of Mike Haggar** into YouTube. Don't think;
  just do it.



After being offered another year as one of *FIFA*'s football pin ups, *OPS* chats to the man with the world's most expensive forehead, **Tim Cahill**, about his obsession with EA's take on the world game

#### OPS: What made you say yes to being EA's FIFA ambassador in Australia?

Tim Cahill: It's simple mate. FIFA is part of a footballer's life. This is what we do in our spare time. It's what I do with my children. When I was asked a couple of years back it was a massive honour and privilege. You inspire kids with the game. Everyone plays it. I love it. My children and I play all the time, my brothers and friends. You become competitive.

# OPS: Do you think, given the game's increasing attention to detail each year, that being a player of the real game gives you an edge?

TC: Yeah, it gives you a lot of knowledge. My kids now know that when they play 3-5-2 it's very attacking, and if they're winning they drop to 4-4-2. They make subs when players get tired. It's amazing what you can learn and also it's the closest you can get to actually playing. I suppose for knowledge it's the closest kids can get. That's why we love it.

# OPS: With the FIFA games getting so accurate, not just in terms of gameplay but also strategy and culture, do you see that having any kind of effect on how the sport as a whole is received in Australia? TC: Most definitely. I think for kids, if it's raining

TC: Most definitely. I think for kids, if it's raining outside they're inside playing FIFA. And if it's not they're outside kicking the ball around. But to play as your heroes and move different players around the pitch, play yourself in goal, it gives a different edge to it.

#### OPS: What are your thoughts on how you've been replicated in the game?

TC: I'm very happy. To be one of the best headers of the ball in the game is massive for me, and just being in the game, being on the front cover the last couple of years, and being involved with some of the biggest players and biggest campaigns, it's something for me as an

Australian. The kids seeing me with Wayne Rooney and players like that — it helps inspire them too because they can relate to another Aussie.

#### OPS: Obviously you're a competitive person; do you get emotionally invested and caught up in the game? Get riled up?

TC: Yeah, I do. One thing that really gets on my nerves is when someone makes 10 subs, changes their team, swaps their formation. I like the game to flow. When they play five fullbacks instead of coming out and having a go, or when they just pass it around in the corner so you can't score. So yeah you get emotional but it's part of the game, it's part of being competitive and it's part of winning and losing.

# TC: We think the entire FIFA community would love to see an 11-on-11 game between two clubs, or even international teams - what do you think?

TC: But the thing is we couldn't play 11-on-11 because we wouldn't pass the ball. Everyone would just try to hog it and score. We'd have 10 forwards. Nah, but I have a massive FIFA night on Monday with Brett Lee and his cousin and my brothers and cousins. It's a massive round robin and there's a lot at stake because it's all about the pride of winning. There's a trophy – the lot.

#### OPS: Who's the best pro footballer you've played in FIFA?

TC: Benzema was pretty good. Joleon
Lescott is not bad. I had a quick game against
Kaka. He was okay as well. In Barcelona I
played against the world champion – he was
Spanish – and he only beat me 1-0. I was
pretty happy with that.



# DARK SOULS



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OCTOBER











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#### IN-DEPTH

## Australianext-gen?

How a relatively unknown Aussie technology company hopes to revolutionise video game graphics, 100,000 times over

ome gather 'round and listen well to the tale of Euclideon, an Australian company that claims it can increase the fidelity of videogame graphics. By a factor of 100,000.

The new technology, called 'Unlimited Detail', was recently showcased in a remarkable YouTube video released by the Brisbane-based technology company. Initially the video shows an expansive one-kilometre-square world filled with trees, rock and ruined ancient buildings, and then it zooms in to reveal a ground made up of individual bits of dirt. Euclideon claims the environment is comprised of 21,062,352,435,000 atoms and, even in its early state, is running at a steady 20 frames a second.

Needless to say, Euclideon's reveal of Unlimited Detail was met with some very mixed reactions from the internet, some cautiously optimistic, others scathingly skeptical.

Coding genius and visionary developer
John Carmack was the first to confirm the future
viability of such tech, by tweeting "Re: Euclideon,
no chance of a game on current gen systems,
but maybe several years from now. Production
issues will be challenging." Carmack's view was
not shared by all of his contemporaries, however.

"They're hyping this as something new and revolutionary because they want funding," wrote Markus 'Notch' Persson, the creator of *Minecraft*, who openly called Euclideon "Snake Oil Salesmen" running a "scam".

But if it is a scam, it's an elaborate one. The government has already invested \$2 million into Euclideon and its technology.

But how does it all work?

"Well, basically anyone who is technical is going to say you can't run that many polygons," explained Bruce Dell, Euclideon CEO while speaking to Kotaku AU. "A good analogy would be this: imagine you go to a library to find a book — say... Snow White. You go to a library and those books aren't on the shelf; they're all lying on the ground. At the moment systems that run point cloud data are doing that, they're putting every point on the screen and there is no order to it. Now imagine you go to a library and all the books are on the shelf and in order — you go to the 'S' Section, then look for 'SNO' and it isn't long before you've found the book you need.

"One system is looking at thousands of books," he continues, "and the other system is looking at 10 labels. That's the basis of a search algorithm like Google or Yahoo – they sort through all the knowledge in the world really quickly because it's categorised.

"We made a search algorithm, but it's a search algorithm that that finds points, it can grab just one atom for every point on the screen."

Explained in those terms, Unlimited Detail makes perfect sense in terms of efficiency. What remains to be seen though – and what is a major sticking point for non-believers – is if the tech is animation and physics friendly.

With Euclideon stating its intent to take its development underground for another year, the answer to that question (and real-time proof of it working) might be a long time in the making.

#### Grant: granted

The government grant afforded to Euclideon will support the programmers to convert the system from PC to game consoles, mobile phones and other platforms. This potentially ground-breaking advance in 3D technology will have other applications too, such as architecture, mining, the sciences and many other industries.

The Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, Senator Kim Carr said "I am pleased to help talented researchers and entrepreneurs capitalise on their good ideas. I look forward to seeing their inventions make a difference to the lives of Australians."

# A STATE OF THE STA

#### 2002

This is going back. Flicking through this issue we can spot previews for The Thing and TimeSplitters 2, plus first looks at True Crime: Street:



of LA and Red Dead Revolver (when it was still a Capcom game). We also exposed Far Cry under the impression it was set to appear on PS2 shortly after the PC (which didn't happen). We also jetted to Miami for a first look at GTA: Vice City and reviewed Red Faction 2, Tekken 4 and... Klonoa Beach Volleyball. Remember Klonoa? He was a cat, possibly. He was a cat-like thing. Or a dog, we're not too sure. He's gone now, at any rate.

#### 2004 >

This issue had two collector covers, a blue Ford one and a red Holden one. We can't find the Holden one anywhere in the office so, if you've still got one, you're one



up on us. Our October 2004 issue featured the first review of the excellent V8 Supercars 2, and our first 10 out of 10 racer in Burnout 3: Takedown, but it also contained a massive in-depth exposé on GTA: San Andreas (complete with a massive haul of screenshots we were probably all wetting our pants over). Coincidentally enough this issue also contains a massive Driv3r guide, Tanner's last game before Driver: San Francisco.

#### 2010 >

12 months ago we sent Nathan overseas for an exclusive first look at how the multiplayer in Call of Duty: Black Ops was shaping up. A year later and he's doing the same thing for Battlefield 3.



Cat loves first-person shooters. Also in this issue we reviewed Mafia II ("Great, but not as great as it could've been") H.A.W.X. 2 ("If you strap in, there are Gs to feel") and even some PSP games (which developers were apparently still making 12 months ago). We also thought up the manliest game they'll make: The Unfragables.

#### OPS/MADMAN PROMOTION



championship osplay, short for "costume play", is a type of performance art where people don costumes and accessories to represent a specific character. The characters are more often than not drawn from popular anime and manga from Japan – but

cosplay isn't necessarily limited to those and can include American

cartoons, sci-fi, comic books, graphic novels, fantasy movies and videogames

Anime / Manga

Judge

Castlev

Australia's finest cosplayers are going head to head in the Madman National Cosplay Championship. The winner of each of the five rounds held across the country until July will progress to the Grand Final in Brisbane on November 5. The prize is a trip to Japan, the home of cosplay!





#### **Adelaide**

The Adelaide round of the Madman National Cosplay Championship was held at AVCON - Adelaide's annual anime and videogame convention – from July 22-24. With seven contestants it was one of the biggest rounds of the year. Being the final chance for anyone to qualify for the finals made things tough for this field. The eventual winners were Olivia Caputi (as Astharoshe Asran "Asta" from Trinity Blood) in first place, Desert Rose (Sanzang from Dynasty Warriors Strikeforce II) in second place and Usagi Hime (as Aeon from Castlevania Judgement) in third place.





With all of the rounds finished Madman can also now reveal the wildcard entries for the finals. They include:

Wildcard 1 – Desert Rose (Adelaide) Wildcard 2 - Endless Blaze (Brisbane) Wildcard 3 - Twinklee and Velithya (Perth)

This will mean that there are now eight contestants and teams for the final event at Supanova Expo Brisbane on November 5. The event will be broadcast live online at www.madman. com.au/cosplay and there'll be plenty of behind the scenes stuff going on as well!

madman.com.au/cosplay



#### IN REALITY

#### Exoskeletons - when can we have one?

rom Aliens to Crysis and a whole bunch of science-fiction based novels. films, games and art in between, the idea of a powered suit worn by a person for extra strength, and/or even as a layer of lightweight but ultra dense armour, has actually been on the minds of scientists and military boffins for a while. In fact, a bunch of prototypes have already been made, with a couple worthy of serious attention.

One of the first serious attempts began way back in the 1960s as General Electric made their own suit - take the power lifter from Aliens, but redesign it in the image of The Robot in the TV show Lost in Space and you're most of the way there. The project was funded by the US military, and its intent was impressive. Once strapped in the operator could lift over 680kg, as the motors in the 'suit' aids his own movements;

one of the applications for it was loading bombs into navy warplanes. While the idea was great in theory, the unit itself also weighed 680kg, wasn't particularly stable and was also skittled by power supply problems.

Back in 2001, the US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) had plans to make an exoskeleton that would be powered by a bunch of tiny internal combustion engines fitted to individual joints DARPA then secured US\$50 to fund a project known as "Exoskeletons for Human Performance Augmentation". 14 companies and universities presented different designs, but Sarcos of Salt Lake City in Utah, US, won the contract.



More info Ants have exoskeletons and ants outnumber humans over a million to one. Can you handle a million ants?

> Since then, Sarcos made an impressive model which led to them being bought our by Raytheon, and in 2008 the company's first 'proof on concept' appeared, the XOS 1. Braces ran around the wearer's outer legs and arms, essentially making them look a bit like a robotic Goro. Still, using a single engine that powered a stack of actuators, sensors and controllers, it allowed the wearer to lift a 68kg weight hundreds of times over without tiring. Roughly a year ago the XOS 2 was revealed, with much sleeker framework that used less fuel and yet gave greater strength (up to 91kg from 68kg). However, a cord tethers it to the power supply: hardly ideal unless you want a tanker following you around pumping petrol into your mechanical joints.

There may be a solution. The University of California, Berkeley (UC Berkley) also developed its BLEEX (Berkeley Lower Extremity Exoskeleton) that was then picked up by Berkeley Bionics, and then Lockheed Martin (LM). Their HULC system does similar things to the XOS 2, but LM is trying to implement a fuel cell to power it, meaning the unit would be able to run for dozens of hours at a time without being tethered to an additional power source - perfect for ongoing, ground-based missions.

On a civilian scale, however, Berkeley Bionics has made eLEGS, a wearable set of limbs that allows wheelchair-bound people to get up and walk around.

And that is truly amazing.

#### NUMBER CRUNCHING

The amount of players that can simultaneously participate in an event in EA's upcoming SSX

> ▲ The number of days two 'protestors' sat on the lawn opposite Valve, demanding to know when Half-Life 2: Episode Three will be released

## Separated at Birth!

NO. 30 Adam Jensen and the Irish broque Colin Farrell



a dry, husky, nowhere-in-particular accent. The two of them are about the same age, too, and Farrell has no problems with growing a wicked, pointy goatee. Plus, a Deus Ex movie is actually a fantastic idea – maybe cast the prickly Pritchard as Steve Buscemi in one of his 'straight' roles and you have an augmented winner.



## SO YOU WANT TO BE A ... DRIFTER

#### **OPTION 1**

any professional motor sport is

#### TIME:

from a weekend track warrior to a D superstar. You need to get as car, and how to set it up according to the different types of surfaces. natural talent, having started at 26. He's now 30.

#### OPTION 2

TIME: Five minutes



#### INTERVIEW

# Shooter revival

Jeremy Bulloch, the man (but not the voice) behind Boba Fett's mask, talks to us about Star Wars on Blu-ray

OPS: How does it feel to be a living legend? And why do you think people love this character so much after all this time?

JB: The fan response is extraordinary and still amazes me. There's something about the character, you know? The costume is strong and when you look at it you think, "Oh my goodness, he is dangerous". Boba doesn't really need to do too much beyond standing there with a menacing look. There is a mystery to him that people still want to find out about

OPS: Is it difficult keeping up with the fan mail?

JB: It is. I always go through mail on weekends if I'm not away and sometimes it takes the whole of Sunday starting at 8am just to clear it all out. Unfortunately some people don't put in return postage so that falls to the bottom of the pile.

wacky stalkers over the years? Do you at least have any Aussie fans with a Boba fetish?

JB: (laughs) No, there are no stalkers, they usually

just say, "Hi Jeremy, nice to see you". Funnily enough I was going to be down in Hobart sometime in June, but unfortunately it didn't work out. But hopefully I will be in Australia again soon.

#### OPS: How does it feel in your Mandalorian armour? Can you see out of it? Does it ride up in the crotch?

JB: It is actually quite easy to see out of. I have a replica costume which was given to me by the dented helmet group that makes all of the outfits. And a couple of times I've worn it and, it's quite funny, because you immediately start to think "I'm Boba Fett." So again you said in the very first question what's it like to be a living legend? I don't see it like that, except that it was just a very fortunate part that came along while I was in the theater at the same time. Not a day goes by without someone saying, "Hey, you're Boba Fett". Occasionally when I get cross with my grandchildren I say, "Remember, Boba Fett is talking to you, now go to bed now". Sometimes it works.

#### OPS: Do the fans at conventions know quite a lot more

JB: You're absolutely right. They know more than me and I try to expect things but then they'll say, "In this scene why didn't you shoot your customized EE-3 carbine, like you did in the other scene?" When that happens I tell them that it's classified information. And that gets me out of it.

#### OPS: What did you think of Lucas' Boba Fett changes? How did the Kiwi voice suit you?

JB: I can understand why they did it, because now we know he is a natural clone. But there is still that thing that you should never know what he looks like. I understand why we were made to know more about Boba Fett. But his [adult] voice really should [and could] have remained as it was.

#### OPS: The Blu-ray sets feature outtakes. Did you make the list?

JB: I'm sure there will be something. But I don't think they'll put in the one where I accidentally say, "Put captain cargo in the Solo hold". I got it all mixed up but no one could understand what I was saving anyway so it didn't matter. I'm

keen to see the outtakes on

OPS: Have you had any Well I've got a few statues... the Blu-rays. My grandkids love sitting [in my office] pretending they're in Slave 1"

#### OPS: What is your most treasured piece in your 'Fett museum'?

JB: Well I've got a few statues. A lot of people give me a lot of different little bits

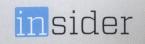
and pieces. And I bought several pieces, so whenever I'm in my office I'm surrounded by Boba Fetts. Some people might say I'm a sad person to have collected all of this stuff. But my grandkids love sitting in there pretending they're in

#### OPS: Is it true that you went into Return of the Jedi not knowing that Boba Fett was going to "die" in... well, Tatooine's sand vagina?

JB: The Sarlacc pit was a complete surprise, I didn't get a script. From day to day and then I was called onto the set and then the pit guys falling in there were all stuntmen. A few of those guys got injured doing that stunt, too. Frankly, the Sarlacc scene made the character more popular by getting rid of him. It was a huge experience and I can't wait to see how it looks on the Blu-ray.

#### OPS: Recently Captain America director Joe Johnson sent an open letter to Lucas asking to do a Boba Fett feature film. Keen for a comeback?

JB: I've heard about Joe Johnson and I would definitely say "look Joe, it would be nice to have a cameo role". That would be really nice; an aging bounty hunter sitting down in the background having a couple of drinks. So who knows? It could happen.



### **INFOCUS**

# **WWE** '12

his year's grappler from THQ is set to represent the biggest leap for the WWE franchise this generation. Fans will finally receive the new engine they're been demanding for years, an engine which reportedly delivers little to no morphing, smoother animations and the ability to cancel moves.

THQ has announced "the most electrifying man in all of entertainment," legendary WWE Superstar The Rock, will be available as a playable character for gamers who preorder WWE '12 at any participating retailer within Australia and New Zealand (while supplies last). The Rock's in-game character will resemble his current-day appearance, including a shaved head and present tattoos.



TOP TEN

# Memorable Spiders

Humans, at their most basic level, are hard-wired to view spiders as creatures of note. Some take note of them much more than others. According to Wikipedia, "50 per cent of women and 10 per cent of men" choose to take note by "shrieking at a frequency high enough to make dogs explode" [citation needed]. Unfortunately, videogames offer zero respite to such people. And here's why...



#### Limbo

When are spider legs not spider legs? When they're the harmless branches of a tree. So when are the harmless branches of a tree n... GAH! Get it of me! Get it o-- [and there goes our head]. You win round #83, *Limbo*. This spider is the favourite because it's the most satisfying to squish. Who would've thunk a small boy damned to hell could have killed this beast with nothing more than Indiana ingenuity?



#### Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance

This series was an arachnophobics wettest nightmare. Your quests started you out killing large-ish spiders, but soon escalated to mammoth spiders, and then abominable ice spiders that *froze and poisoned* (or 'froisoned') *you to death*. It got worse though You also got stalked by "driders"; hybrids of dark elves and giant spiders. Marvellous.



#### Castlevania: LoS

For a franchise that fixates on vampires harder than the bubbleheaded *Twilight* crowd, Konami sure pelted us with a lot of werewolves and gigantic spiders. But for all their bitey irritation, these eightlegged beasts made for some bad-arse transportation. Lasso one of these guys and love life (by killing) as a spider-rider.



#### **Resident Evil series**

The thing that annoyed us most about Capcom's angry arachnids were their snooty dining habits. With a zomble apocalypse on they had wall-to-wall, preslaughtered shambling meat on the menu. But nooo, they wanted their human steak 'super rare' (with a side-order of shotgun shells). Finicky idiots.



#### **Brütal Legend**

We probably could have asked nicely for the giant bass strings she spun, but she didn't seem like the negotiating type. And so, out of personal respect, we got straight to the arse-kicking. She made our list because of her fantastic character design. It's pretty hard to hate a blade-based spider with fully-sick exhaust pipes.



#### LOTR: Return of the King

By and large, we thought Samwise Gamgee was a bit of a weiner. But our respect levels for him rose in this PS2 slash 'em up when he manned-up to take on Shelob (the mother of all giant fantasy spiders). Unlike the movie, EA had him trash-talking the beast during and after the fight. Respect.



Weighing in at roughly four times larger than your average spiderant, Queen Tarantella truly is the mother of all spiderants. What's worse, killing her will spawn her husband, King Aracobb, the daddy-man of all spiderants. Rest assured, many hunters paid the price for breaking up this happy home.



#### **EDF: Insect Armageddon**

We know what you're saying: "it's Insect Armageddon, dingus". But hey, this game dropped mechanical arachnids in to spice up the slaughter, too. And make no mistake, it was a slaughter as these behemoths suffered from "boss epidermis syndrome" – that debilitating disease where your weakpoints glow.



#### White Knight Chronicles

This series had more spiders in it than the sub-levels of a junkie's skin, or possibly even your bed right now. Their sheer volume didn't impress us so much as their deliciously 'Engrish' name. As a general rule, when christening a creature that fires white sputum, one should always steer clear of the term "sprog".

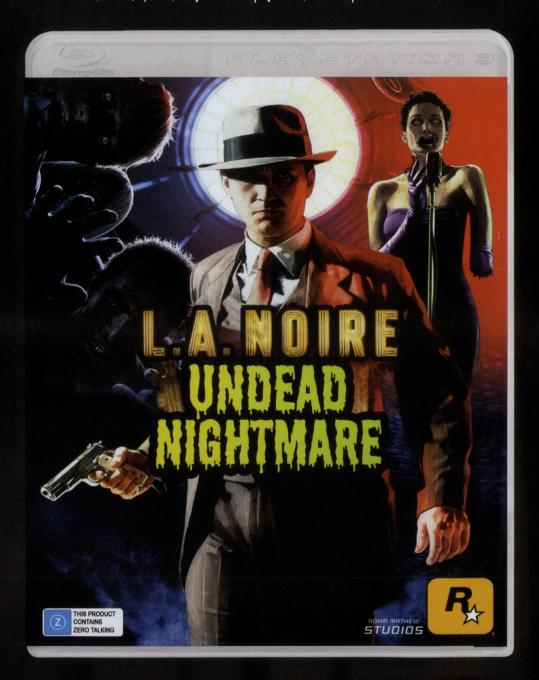


#### Ninja Gaiden 2

When you're the beleaguered boss of a sub-rate ninja group called the Black Spider Clan, you'd better have one wicked spider tatt to make up for your crappy constituency. Best case scenario, BE a half-spider mutant thing that looks tough and talks like it has been gargling whiskey and gravel. This guy certainly talked a big game, but we couldn't take his recurring boss fights seriously. Why? Because, as the first boss in the game, he was always going to be a dead spider-man walking.



# WHEN THE VICS RISE UNMURDERED EVERY RAT BASTARD IS A PERP





Sort the corpses from the zombies by kneeling really, really close to them



Use logic to pick holes in your undead suspect's story



Use your highly deductive brain to keep it inside your head, stupid



## Around the World in PS3

OPS trawls high and low for what's going on around the globe in gaming



#### ▲ REGISTER THIS

#### LOS ANGELES, USA

IOS developer Broken Thumb Apps has been fined US\$50,000 for allegedly violating the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA). According to prosecutors several of the company's applications, including Emily's Girl World and Emily's Runway High Fashion violated the COPPA by collecting "thousands of email addresses" from kids who posted comments and requests for advice. It's good to see some punishment for the companies that don't give parents the opportunity to make smart choices when it comes to their children's sharing of information on their smart phones.



#### ▲ WOULD YOU KINDLY?

#### THE OCEAN

Peter Thiel, the founder of PayPal, is continuing his work towards making a Rapture-esque "Start-Up Country" off the coast of San Francisco. The floating sovereign nation would be oil-rig-style constructions positioned in areas free of regulation, laws, moral conventions and possibly pants. The Seasteading Institute says it will 'give people the freedom to choose the government they want instead of being stuck with the government they get.' Mr. Thiel called seasteading an 'open frontier for experimenting with new ideas for trouble to us. Good luck with all the DNA-splicers.



#### ▲ WEIRD SCIENCE

#### **ﷺ LONDON, UK**

Gamers want to see the "perfect human being in digital form" Sony's president of Worldwide Studio, Shuhei Yoshida, has said of the games we'll be playing. "I think [that's] what people [will] want in games in 10 years," he said, "where you can't tell the difference if it's real or digital. In your reality it's a human." Sony's 3D chief Mick Hocking, weighed in on the discussion at the same developers event by saying "In 10 years, are we going to be able to interact with characters in the games? The more accurate they become, it's still an acting performance that's coming back at you." You're one step closer to falling in love with your Shepard



#### ▲ MULTIFOR ALL

#### K LONDON, UK

Your average single-player only experience will cease to exist by the time 2014 rolls around. That's the forecast of veteran game consultant Mark Cerny, who has worked with Sony on games such as Crash Bandicoot and Jak & Daxter. "Right now you sit in your living room and you're playing a game by yourself - we call it the sp mission or the singleplayer campaign." says Cerny. "In a world with Facebook I just don't think that's going to last." Cerny cites action RPG Demon's Souls as an example of where he sees the "solo experience" heading. Wonderful. Let's all get set for solo griefing. "OMG U saved the game? Noob"



#### ▲ DROP DOWN AND GIVE US 20

#### COLOGNE, GERMANY

Sony's entering the exercise-gaming race. the publisher announced *Move Fitness* during its gamescom keynote. A brief teaser trailer shown to attendees offered a short but sweet look at what the final product may contain: Move-based mini-games and the sort of exercises that send us into cardiac arrest just from looking at them. We also spotted an interesting riff on Fruit Ninja's food slicing antics. With body-thrashers like WiiFit and Zumba Fitness tearing up the sales charts, it was only a matter of time until we saw this. Here's hoping it shapes up well enough to shape us up well enough. Or something.

#### INTERNATIONAL TOP 5 CHARTS

#### 0

#### EUROPE



- 1 DiRT 3 Codemasters
- 2 Call of Duty: Black Ops
- 3 Sniper: Ghost Warrior City
  Interactive
- 4 L.A. Noire Rockstar
- 5 Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood

  Uhisoft

ww.vgchartz.com





- Jikkyou Powerful Pro Yakyuu 2011 Konami
- 2 Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood
- 3 Operation Flashpoint: Red River Codemasters
- 4 Alice: Madness Returns EA
- 5 SSIV: Arcade Edition Capcom

#### **USA**



- 1 NCAA Football 12 EA
- 2 Call of Duty: Black Ops
- Activision
- **3 Mortal Kombat** Warner Bros.
- 4 Grand Theft Auto IV Rockstar
- 5 Bleach: Soul Resurreccion NIS America

\*International publishers may differ from local ones

## THIS MONTH

Your 30-day planner of games and the good stuff!

Aug 31

#### Scarface

One of the most iconic movies ever made. Scarface, hits Blu-ray today. Brian De Palma directed it, Oliver Stone wrote it, Al Pacino owned it as Tony Montana. There's a whole bunch of special features too.



#### Resistance 3

Insomniac's Resistance 3 lands to finish the fight - or at least to kick more alien scum in the butt. We'll see you online: dusty Alice Springs is one of the multiplayer maps.



#### Sept 9

#### **Footy Finals**

NRL and AFL fans, prepare to lose your mind as your respective codes start the beginning of the end, entering their knockout stages





#### Sept 9

Another shooter claws for your wallet – and your brraaaaains. Dead Island and its zombie horde are out today, having somehow snatched a MA15+ rating.

**Dead Island** 



#### Sept 11

#### US Open Tennis

The US Open Men's tennis finals are on tonight. We don't know who will on centre court, but you can bet that the winner will make a 'racquet' on the final point. Ha ha oh dear.



#### Sept 14

**Star Wars** Mr. Beardy, a.k.a. George Lucas, lets loose the monstrous nine-disc Star Wars Blu-ray set. Featuring all six films, a couch load of special feature and - you wouldn't think it's possible - more deleted scenes. See p34 to see how you can win a copy!



#### Source Code

Source Code is out on Blu-ray today, starring Jake Gyllenhaal as a solider who's part of a time-travelling experiment. He's thrust back in time to live the same moment over and over, until he figures out how to stop terrorists.



#### Sept 24

The Parklife music festival begins today in Melbourne, before heading to Perth (Sept 25) Brisbane (Oct 1) Sydney (Oct 2) and Adelaide (Oct 3). Digitalism, Duck Sauce and Gossip are some of the acts

Parklife



#### FIFA 12

The world's biggest sports game, FIFA 12, kicks itself off store shelves and into PS3s around the country. More than just a roster update, this latest version promises to be as big a leap as 09 was to 10. That is, enormous



## Can't miss...

Driver: San Francisco SEPTEMBER 2

# Release Schedule

Release dates, pre-order deals, new information and much more

#### **OUT NOW**

Air Conflicts: Secret War Genre: Flight Distributor: AIE

#### Deus Ex: Human Revolution

Genre: Shooter/RPG Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

#### **Rugby World Cup 2011**

Genre: Sports Distributor: AIE

#### Driver: San Francisco

Genre: Driving Distributor: Uhisoft

#### Resistance 3

Genre: Shooter Distributor: Sonv

#### Bodycount

Genre: Shooter Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

#### SEPTEMBER 2011

Genre: Shooter Distributor: QVS Date: September 9

#### Warhammer 40,000: **Space Marine**

Genre: Action Distributor: THQ Date: September 9

#### Child of Eden

Genre: Odd Distributor: Ubisoft Date: September 13

Genre: Racing Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners Date: September 22

#### Bleach: Soul Ressureccion

Genre: Action Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners Date: September 22



#### FIFA 12

Genre: Sports Distributor: EA Date: September 29

#### Atelier Totori

Genre: RPG Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners Date: September 29

Genre: Sports Distributor: EA Date: TBC

Madden NFL 12 Genre: Sports Distributor:

EA Date: TBC

#### **God of War Origins**

Genre: Action-adventure Distributor: Sony Date: TBC

#### Shadow of the Colossus

Genre: Platformer Distributor: Sony Date: TBC

#### PES 2012

Genre: Sports Distributor: Mindscape Date: TBC

#### **Supremacy MMA**

Genre: Sports Distributor: AIE Date: TBC

#### X-Men: Destiny

Genre: Sports Distributor: Activision Date: TBC

#### OCTOBER 2011

#### NBA 2K12

Genre: Sports Distributor: 2K Date: October 4

#### **Twisted Metal**

Genre: Racing Distributor: Sony Date: October 4

Genre: Adventure Distributor: AIE Date: October 7

#### Dark Souls

Genre: Action Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners Date: October 6

#### **Just Dance 3**

Genre: Dance Distributor: Ubisoft Date: October 11

#### Ace Combat: Assault Horizon

Genre: Flight Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners Date: October 14

#### Batman: Arkham City

Genre: Action Distributor: Warner Bros. Date: October 19

#### Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One

Genre: Platformer Distributor: Sony Date: October 19

#### Battlefield 3

Genre: Shooter Distributor: EA Date: October 27

Genre: RPG Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners Date: October 27

#### **NOVEMBER 2011**

#### The Lord of the Rings: War in the North

Genre: RPG Distributor: Warner Bros. Date: November 2

#### Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception

Genre: Action-adventure Distributor: Sony Date: November 4

#### Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3

Genre: Shooter Distributor: Activision Date: November 8



#### The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim

Genre: RPG Distributor: AIE Date: November 11

#### Saints Row: The Third

Genre: Action Distributor: THQ Date: November 15

#### Assassin's Creed Revelations

Genre: Action-adventure Distributor: Ubisoft Date: November 15

#### Need For Speed The Run

Genre: Racing Distributor: EA Date: November 17

#### Sonic Generations

Genre: Platformer Distributor: SEGA Date: November 22

Genre: Fighting Distributor: THQ Date: November 25

#### Ultimate Marvel Vs. Capcom 3

Genre: Fighting Distributor: THQ Date: November

#### 2011/2012

#### **Metal Gear Solid** HD Collection

Genre: Action Distributor: Mindscape Date: TBC 2011



Genre: Action Distributor: THQ Date: TBC 2011

#### Resident Evil:

**Operation Raccoon City** Genre: Action Distributor:

TBA Date: TBC 2011

#### Limited Edition

#### **Dark Souls**

Set in a rich, dark fantasy universe, the game's tense dungeon crawling, fearsome enemy encounters and groundbreaking online features combine for an utterly compelling experience. Dark Souls breaks down barriers with a seamless world that encourages exploration and demands adaptability. As players encounter terrifying enemies and discover new areas, the game's foundation of challenge and reward permeates the experience, delivering an unparalleled sense of achievement.

The Limited Edition includes: game guide, special hardbound art book, original soundtrack, behind-the-scenes video.



Rocksmith

Genre: Music Distributor: Ubisoft Date: TBC 2011

Silent Hill: Downpour Genre: Action Distributor: Mindscape Date: TBC 2011

SSX

Genre: Racing Distributor: Activision Date: January 2012

Mass Effect 3

Genre: Action RPG Distributor: EA Date: March 6 2012

Date. March o Bor

**Tomb Raider** 

Genre: Action-adventure Distributor: Ubisoft Date: TBC 2012

Agent

**Genre:** Action **Distributor:** Rockstar **Date:** TBC

Spec Ops: The Line

Genre: Action Distributor: 2K

**Date:** TBC 2012

Metal Gear Solid: Rising

Genre: Action Distributor: Mindscape Date: TBC 2012

The Last Guardian

Genre: Adventure Distributor:

Sony Date: TBC 2012

Max Payne 3

Genre: Action Distributor: Rockstar Date: TBC 2012

**Hitman Absolution** 

Genre: Action Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners Date: TBC 2012

Prev 2

Genre: Shooter Distributor: TBA Date: TBC 2012

Final Fantasy XIII-2

**Genre:** RPG **Distributor:** Namco Bandai Partners **Date:** TBC 2012 ▶ Limited Edition

#### **Ace Combat: Assault Horizon**

Ace Combat: Assault Horizon is a completely new Action Shooting game. Aircraft are shredded to pieces, canopies shattered, enemy troops annihilated and buildings toppled. No detail is left untouched. Even the dust kicked up from aircraft exhaust is realistically recreated!

The Limited Edition includes: Steel Book Packaging, Video game sound track, Notebook signed by the development team, exclusive DLC aircraft.



EB GAMES \$98 Estimated dispatch date: 13/10/2011 JB HIFI \$94.98 Estimated dispatch date: 13/10/2011 GAME \$99.95 Estimated dispatch date: 13/10/2011

Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Future Soldier Genre: Action Distributor:

Ubisoft Date: TBC 2012

Ridge Racer Unbounded Genre: Racing Distributor:

Namco Bandai Partners **Date:** TBC 2012

**Dust 514** 

Genre: Shooter Distributor: TBA Date: TBC 2012

BioShock Infinite

Genre: Shooter Distributor: 2K Date: TBC 2012



# In their words

Industry chatter, inside tips and loose lips



"You know, we've really wanted to do multiplayer since the first Mass Effect. I mean, it's a big universe, with a great

story and tons of interesting characters, so why wouldn't we want to share that in the multiplayer space? But we've still not figured out the right way to do it. There is always a way to do things "BioWare's Ryan Warden at 2011 gamescom.

"Without giving too much away, you can expect that from all of the military hardware the Colonial



Marines have access to you're going to get the chance to either play around with it or be part of using it"

Gearbox's chief creative director **Brian Martel** dancing around whether or not Power Loaders will be useable in *Aliens: Colonial Marines*.



"And all I want to do, if you will, is to have them rot from the core"

EACEO **John Riccitiello**'s sentiments on what he hopes to do to Activision's star franchise, *Call of Duty*. Them's fighting words.

"In order for one to win, the other doesn't have to lose"

Meanwhile, **Eric Hirshberg**, Activison

CEO, takes a more philosophical approach as he responds to Ritticello's rhetoric. So nyah.

▶ Preorder + Limited Edition

#### **Batman: Arkham City**

Soar into Arkham City, the new maximum security "home" for all of Gotham City's thugs, gangsters and insane criminal masterminds. Set inside the heavily fortified walls of a sprawling district in the heart of Gotham City, this highly anticipated sequel to *Arkham Asylum* introduces a brand-new story that draws together a new, all-star cast of classic characters and murderous villains from the Batman universe, as well as a vast range of new and enhanced gameplay features to deliver the ultimate experience as the Dark Knight.

The Collector's Edition includes: Custom Batman statue produced by Kotobukiya, Collectible art book, Early access to the Iceberg Lounge Challenge Map and *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* skin, *Batman: Arkham City* album from WaterTower Music including original songs by hit artists, available via digital redemption, Bonus DC Universe animated original movie, *Batman: Gotham Knight*, and four collectible cards.



#### EB GAMES \$148

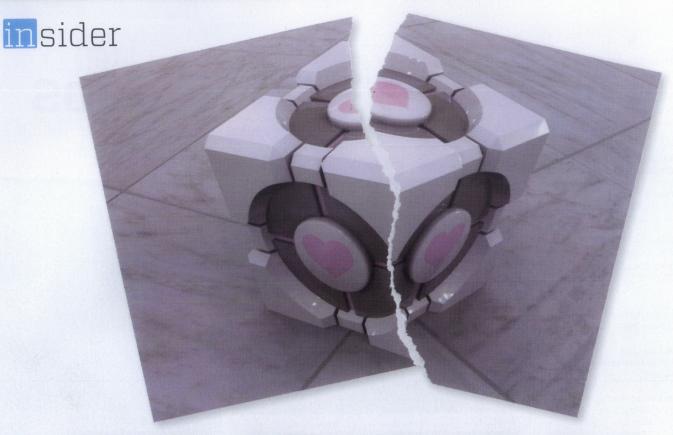
Preorder to get the Joker's Carnival Map Estimated dispatch date: 19/10/2011

#### **JB HI-FI** \$147

Preorder to get the Robin Challenge Maps, Red Robin character skin, as well as Black Mask Hideout and Freight Train Escape map Estimated dispatch date: 19/10/2011

#### **GAME** \$149.98

Preorder to get the Batman Beyond ingame skin **Estimated dispatch date:** 19/10/2011



# IT'S BETTER TO HAVE LOVED.

...than to have never mopped up your tears with a DualShock

eally good videogames are ruining me. I got to the end of Portal 2 and felt drained, like I'd just Bear Grylls'd myself up the side of a mountain. But it wasn't that I was physically spent - my emotions had been torn at, tossed into absurd situations where I was both pressing on and gripping as tightly as I could to see what happened next in the riveting plot. "Gabe Newell was **nothing** 

Half-Life 2 did the same with that ending, after I clawed all the way to the top of the tower

and confronted Breen, the filthy snake. Borderlands was just an epic journey as I sought new quests, finding new loot, quests, loot, claptraps, loot and so on. Far Cry 2, even with its flaws, left me feeling dirty as there was no 'right' way to end it with its binary decision, and I'd partly become the monster I was trying to stop. BioShock was a tragedy. Dead Space tore my nerves to shreds.

thumbs to shreds. As soon as the credits rolled on these games I felt like it would be impossible to play anything else for a while. They'd affected me in ways I hadn't expected. Nothing else mattered, and simultaneously I just couldn't imagine putting any energy into

Ninja Gaiden Sigma tore my

anything new. Portal 2 still makes me quiver. I was in a blue funk for about a week after I shot that final, fateful portal. It was the end of an intense tryst that was infinitely tempting and thrilling, but could only end one way. What could I do?

I dived back in, hoping to find the something that was missing.

And I promptly sucked the magic out of it. I knew its tricks. I knew what it had to offer, what it was going to do next and how it was going

to do it. I thought about trying to beat it in record time, wringing as many Trophies out of it as I could and pick away

at the seams, but when I started to treat it as an object I felt like I'd killed the thing that I'd cared so much about

Trying the developer's commentary was even worse. I can appreciate how

> much effort and thought Valve put into the game and the way that they revealed their secrets, but every time I played a node I felt like I was performing an autopsy. Gabe Newell was nothing but a iolly coroner.

Like any break up, I think it's going to take time to recover but I doubt that I'll go back. I've tried the other games that snared me in their tempestuous, haunting, tear-jerking web, and some have left me empty while others have left me smiling when I played them through again. It's been a few months since the credits rolled on Portal 2, but really, I think I'll leave the cover closed, and the memories where I left them.



but a jolly coroner"

#### opinion Paul Taylor

Paul Taylor isn't often sent into a stupor, but that's because there aren't that many games that yank on his heart like a five-year-old with a helium balloon.



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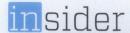








XBOX 360. LIVE. Namco





# DON'T FEEL SLEAZY JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE EASY

Or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Breaking Things When the Brake Stops Working

he 'games reviewer' profession is fraught with two things:
paradoxes, and butt cheek lesions caused by couch drag.
This is an article about the first one. The other day, while

waiting for a package to be made ready, a nosy courier broke logic by calling me a "pussy for being hardcore" and "insane for not trying insanity".

The theme of his one-sided conversation? The difficulty setting I was about to select on *Game X*. The reward for his outside-the-box appraisal of my skills? Irony. He left our cube of an office through a window and I beat the wrap by claiming "temporary insanity, your honour".

Zutroy's social skills and personal hygiene responsibilities were severely lacking that day but his snide comments did plant a seed. Why do I always punish myself on the hardest difficulty? Could I be happy finishing my games in half the time? Would the money that'd save me on lesion cream let me buy that pony I've always wanted — or would the saddle sores negate the purchase?

So many questions.

In the search for answers I loaded *DiRT 3*, erased my hard-earned Expert save file and busted myself back down to beginner. The reek of rookie was thick that day my friends, and I could feel the self respect leaking out of me with every driving aid enabled. The gorge rose

in my throat when I spotted the option for a racing line in a rally game. And, when I realised the auto-braking aid never changed that line from "go flat knackers green", I'm not ashamed to say I

threw up in my mouth.

Playing easy was hard. But after much perseverance and a few events, something quite unexpected happened. I started having fun. And not "flip the bird at the TV because I no longer have

to punch myself in the face because I've finally won fun", either. Genuine, honest to goodness, fun.

Suddenly *DIRT 3* was no longer out to rort me. No longer did Codemasters' physics system want to code-master my ass by booking me an aquaplane flight to treesville. Essentially, I was now playing a beautiful handling, gorgeous looking version of one of my favourite oldschool games: *Sega Rally*. Better still, this was a version of *Sega Rally* that didn't take the piss out of me with a "Game over yeahhh!" Jingle. Because there was no game over here, only pure, unadulterated WIN.

The more I think about it, the more it makes sense to me: why should I deny myself a gaming experience laced with win? I'm now replaying all of my "expertly beaten" games on the most idiotic, mouth-breathingly easy difficulty possible. I recommend you all try it (with a bucket within easy reach).

"Why should I deny myself a gaming experience

#### a gaming experience laced with win?"



#### OPINION Adam Mathew

Adam Mathew is a person who finds it Easy to be Insane. Despite what this document suggests, he will probably continue as is.







# IF THE BOT FITS

This town ain't big enough for the videogame industry and the Australian Christian Lobby, but has the ACL just shot itself in the foot?

man with a conviction is a hard man to change. Tell him you disagree and he turns away. Show him facts or figures and he questions your sources. Appeal to logic and he fails to see your point."

That was Stanford University psychologist Leon Festinger describing a famous case study in psychology back in the 1950s. Festinger and several of his colleagues had infiltrated the Seekers, a small Chicago-area cult whose members thought they were communicating with aliens. Through the group's leader the cult believed they had been given the precise date for the end of the world – December 21, 1954.

Of course, the word didn't end in 1954. What did the Seekers do when challenged by the fact they had been wrong all along? They simply accepted the leader's explanation that they had been spared at the last moment and carried on being crackpots.

People don't want to change their minds. It's why it's impossible for any games industry commentator to have a proper debate with the likes of the Australian Christian Lobby's Jim Wallace.

Jim Wallace is probably *not* an idiot. Idiots don't get put in charge of one of the world's most elite special forces units; Wallace was commander of the Australian SASR during his 32-year military career. But in the words of Michael Brant Shermer, founder of The Skeptics Society, "Smart people believe weird things because they are skilled at defending beliefs they arrived at for non-smart reasons."

Illusory correlation is how people falsely perceive an association between two elements or situations. For instance, a common example of illusory correlation is when people construct false associations between membership in a statistical minority group and rare (and typically negative) behaviours. A common example of illusory correlation is when people assume killers kill because they listened to Marilyn Manson, watched *The Matrix*, played *Doom* or participated in some other sort of niche activity.

It's part of what's known as confirmation bias; it's a tendency for people to favour only information that confirms their own preconceptions or hypotheses, regardless of whether the information is actually true. People tend to interpret ambiguous evidence as supporting their existing position.

It's why, when a right-wing self-described Christian Norwegian – who acquaintances have described as a gun-lover obsessed with what he saw as the threats of multiculturalism and Muslim immigration – mentions playing a few videogames during the

lead up to his horrific crimes against the people of Norway, men like the Australian Christian Lobby's Jim Wallace are all too quick to pounce.

"If there are even a few deranged minds that can be taken over the edge by an obsession with violent games it is in every Australian's interest that we ban them," says Wallace in a June 25 ACL press release.

What Wallace has done here is nothing short of astonishing. Is he really under the impression that Anders Behring Breivik was "taken over the edge" purely by a violent videogame? Does he really believe that Norway's deadliest day since World War II was triggered by nothing more

than a videogame?

Wallace's offensive simplification
of this tragedy is as stunning as it is
disgusting. Wallace carefully and
conveniently ignores the fact that, in
his 1528-page manifesto, Breivik

makes it quite clear what "tipped the scales" for him, and it wasn't a videogame. At all. Modern Warfare 2 wasn't the difference between Breivik living a normal life and Breivik orchestrating an unprecedented massacre. Modern Warfare 2 didn't make Breivik an insane anti-Islam extremist.

Breivik mentions 'Modern Warfare' in the context of the videogame itself five times. That's five times in 769,412 words. He uses the word Christian in some form 2218 times. He uses the words Muslim or Islam in various forms a combined total of 6995 times. This manifesto isn't about how Modern Warfare 2 made Breivik want to slaughter dozens of innocent people; it's the babble of a bigoted madman on a crusade of evil. Wallace is also either blissfully ignorant or wilifully dismissive of the fact that the manifesto includes 10 pages of Bible quotes and historical justifications for atrocities. Videogames really don't appear to any more than one of Breivik's various hobbies, which include (by his own admission) weightlifting, snowboarding, opera, theatre, art, and science fiction, among other interests.

That Breivik has played *Modern Warfare 2* is entirely unsurprising. Almost every single male I know between 20 and 40, inside the games industry and outside of it, has played *Modern Warfare 2*. Before *Black Ops* came out it was the fastest-selling entertainment product in history. It's more successful than virtually every film ever made. Breivik also mentioned he liked *Star Wars* and *The Lord of the Rings*, just like most people who *own a DVD player*.

That Breivik, at one stage, points to Modern Warfare 2 multiplayer as part of his "training" is unsettling, but playing Call of Duty will no sooner turn you into a soldier than playing FIFA will turn you into a footballer. Call of Duty can 'teach' you where the bullets go to kill a person, just like FIFA can show you where the ball goes to win, but it's not going to make you any better at it. I don't think the army is going to sell off all its training facilities and just buy every soldier a PS3 to keep in shape.

That Wallace and the ACL have used a tragedy of this scale to further their own agenda is appalling, but it really shouldn't be a surprise that organisations like the ACL need to resort to tactics like these in a country where organisations like the ACL are rapidly losing relevance. Not only is Australia one of the least religious nations in the developed world (on par with similarly secular countries such as Japan, the Netherlands, Finland, and France) but savvy, online Christians are also distancing

themselves from the intolerant ACL. The ACL knows it and they're trying to make hay while the sun shines, desperately trying to make an impact before there's no one left that'll listen.

Wallace showed his true colours earlier this year with a hate-fuelled Twitter post on ANZAC Day ("Just hope that as we remember Servicemen and women today we remember the Australia they fought for — wasn't gay marriage and Islamic! [sic]"). His ill-timed rant was met with widespread outrage and he removed the post claiming he'd been misinterpreted. Why he's permitted on television in 2011 after comments like this is befuddling.

If Wallace were shouting this on a street corner wearing a cardboard sign he'd be ignored. The solution? The media (us included) should simply stop putting him in the spotlight. The only reason he thinks he's a cowboy is because we keep giving him a f—king hat.



#### Angry Sackboy

Angry Sackboy is an ex-videogame journalist sobered by such a staggering act of violence and incensed it took less than 24 hours for the ACL to exploit it for its own agenda.

# inbox



**▼ LETTER OF THE MONTH** 

## YEARNING JAPANESE

'm sure you are aware of a little game called Catherine that was released recently in the US and the apparent nature of its never arriving status here in Australia. When I read an article of it being picked up by a distributor here, Deep Silver, I was shocked, flabbergasted, humbled even. There was actually someone here who was still willing to fight the good fight and bring us those highly anticipated games some of us have been hanging out for With the lack of region coding. some of us take for granted those games that are actually available in the corner store, and I personally prefer grabbing a copy there over importing and fumbling around with offshore

Recently another game, No More Heroes: Heroes' Paradise arrived in store BEFORE the US, several weeks ahead of them in fact, and this puzzled me. Generally, being in Australia and such, we are the shafted community in gaming. Everything developed in Japan where a small portion is translated and sent to the US, and even a smaller portion of that finds its way down under.

Now in the case of No More Heroes, it was already translated,

fully made and out on the Wii, then ported to PS3 and released here first. So, they can release them here

I know, it's all about the games that the distributors think are worth bringing over, but it just agitates me that there are so many quality games out there we will never see because someone in the chain of command doesn't think it's worth it. Gamers in Australia have to put in that extra yard other gamers around the world don't have to (see: importing Mortal Kombat madness).

me since I love RPGs and games based on anime, but I just hope one day we can all walk down to the corner store and find that game we have been hanging out for, undelayed, unbanned and unbelievably awesome.

Of course, there will be games we will probably never see though, like Persona 5.

Michael Bonvino, via email

Deep Silver's announced that it's bringing Catherine to Europe, but Deep Silver don't have an Australian operation. Deep Silver's Dead Island is being distributed by QVS in Australia as we speak, however, so perhaps that's a good sign...

#### Speak to us!

the mag? We want your opinions and questions on *OPS*, on games – on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:

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...and also on Facebook! facebook.com/ LETTER OF THE MONTH WINS A COPY OF:

#### **Driver: San Francisco**

It's not Japanese but it is awesome. Enjoy!

#### **Trophy whorefare**

Hi auvs.

I was reading some PS3 forums on Trophies the other day and found a discussion surrounding how many Trophies does a gamer need to earn your respect. I for one like to collect Trophies and have found games have developed a longer life span for me as I seek to obtain as many Trophies as possible. I've played through some games three or four times to do so. However this is only because I have enjoyed these games and have had many hours of fun replaying them. I also understand that many gamers don't play games to collect Trophies, as Trophies don't necessarily make a great game any better. I think back to the first Uncharted. I played that game to death and then did so again when it was patched with Trophy support. Trophies did not make it more fun, it gave me a reason to pull it out again and once more enjoy a great game. It struck me as a little strange that gamers I meet online would determine my level of skill as a gamer and whether they should respect me based on the number of Trophies I have

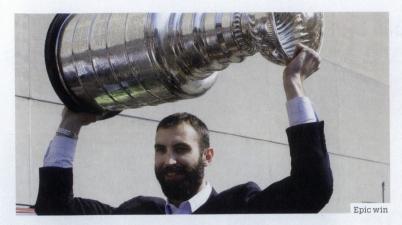
Some gamers thought Trophies were not a good indicator of a gamers skill. This is true for a number of reasons. Firstly, many gamers only ask one question when deciding to play a game, is it fun. I don't believe franchises such as Uncharted, Batman and Assassin's Creed (to name a few) would see less sales if they didn't have Trophy support. Gamers would still play these games because they know they are likely to experience a great game. Secondly, many gamers couldn't care less about Trophies but still kick your arse online. Thirdly, I believe that the addition of Trophies has made mediocre and downright awful games more attractive to those who hunt Trophies. How else could you explain a platinum for MW2 in the same list as a platinum for Hannah Montana? I don't mean to be judgemental but it doesn't make sense to me.

Some gamers expressed that high completion rates in Trophy lists regardless of the number of platinum's was respectable. So a short list of games showing 100% each was worthy of respect. I think this is quite a reasonable opinion but again I think it is not without a degree of fallibility. Many games now have an online component to the Trophy list. There are those who are not interested in online multiplayer and tend to focus on the single-player component. Should they be less respected as a gamer due to an incomplete Trophy list? Also, some games may not have lived up to the expectations of gamers and they move on to something more enjoyable. Let's face it: with the number of great games coming out, the desire to finish one game and move on to the next is high.

Some gamers thought that difficult Platinum Trophies were worthy of respect. I can't argue with this as there are some games where I would just not be good enough to achieve the Platinum Trophy. It actually impresses me that someone would have the skill or put in the time to achieve some of the harder Platinums. Kudos to the hardcore. A gamer could only have a completed Trophy list for *Demon's Souls* and they would have my respect.

Finally, some gamers thought respect should go to those with a large number of Platinums. Again, I don't think I can argue with this but this doesn't mean gamers with low Trophy counts should be disregarded. A high Platinum count indicates a gamer devoted to not only playing games but hunting Trophies which I believe can be exclusive from each other. Imagine having to play crap games to achieve a platinum. Crazy or dedicated?

After reading some of the responses I decided to have a look at the Trophy counts of some of the gamers to see what a high Trophy count would look like. I



## "My mother says I will be bored behind a work desk every day"

nodded my head in quiet respect when I saw 89 Platinums then 110, 180 and then I almost fell off my chair when I saw 254 Platinums. Apparently there are others with even higher numbers. Seriously! Could this possibly be true? Think about it, how long have trophies been around for, mid 2008? About three years, even if it is four years that is an average of approximately 63 Platinums a year.

Firstly, who has the time to devote to this? Do they sleep, work, have a family? What's going on? Secondly, they must be extremely wealthy to afford to buy all these games or even hire them for weeks on end in order to get the Platinum. Either that or they have many generous friends. Are there even that many games with Platinum Trophies?

Personally I think this is quite impossible. Anyway what's the point of being number one when most people think you're a wanker who is hacking Trophies, there's no respect in that. What do you guys think? I would be interested in hearing your thoughts and those of your readers. And if you're interested in the number of trophies I have collected, I have 15 Platinums and have just passed 2000 total trophies. I'm quite proud of this even though I may not be respected for it.

David Fox, via email

Well, there's a difference between Trophies that take skill and Trophies that just take time. Trophies can be a decent indicator of gaming prowess but they can also just be a sign of a gamer with more spare time on his or her hands than other gamers. Anybody can grind out a bunch of straightforward Trophy with enough free time but tricky ones are a different story altogether.

#### Career path

Dear the best magazine on this planet, I'm currently in year 11 doing my senior schooling. Just the other night, I drove and dropped my eldest sister off at her friend's house and I was invited inside to meet a few new people. One person who I met who I remember almost every word of our conversation was my sister's friend's boyfriend because he was telling me his studies at Qantm College. I knew who they were because of reading the advertisements in the OPS magazine and every time I see that page with Qantm College on it. I always think just how awesome it'll be to study those courses offered. Anyway, we were talking about how he was doing a Major in Game Design and how much fun he is having with it. After talking for about 20 or so minutes, I did have to leave but I had so many questions to ask him about what he is doing.

The whole concept of being in a team of people and designing an original game sounds so fun. I have been on the college's website looking at the courses and all of the requirements so far are everything I can achieve. I'm not going to lie, I do find it quite humorous that to do game programming you must do a LOT of mathematics (which is what I am doing at the moment.), but people like me, instead of studying would rather play the games in the now, instead of studying mathematics to pass that course and do a games programming course in the future.

As of today, I'm still not sure what I want to do. I was talking to my mother about Qantm but she wants me to do something else, something more practical. Maybe she's right when she says that I will get bored sitting behind a desk day in and day out (but you guys don't look all that bored, right?). I have loved games ever since I

can remember as a little child – my first memory of video games goes back when I was four or five years old and I woke up around 3:00am to play my Super Nintendo. Whether I do choose a career in Interactive Entertainment – or anything along those lines – or something completely different, I will still love my games all the same.

I know you guys don't really do any of those sorts of things, but in a sense you do the same – your work consists of video games; something I sincerely enjoy. My question is that did anyone at the OPS headquarters have the idea to do what they're doing (as their job) or was it just something that was merely a dream but now it's something that they love doing? My mother says I will be bored behind a work desk every day, but it would be something that I would love to do. At the moment, it is my dream job, but I don't know whether it would be my so called dream job when it becomes my reality.

Anyway guys, love the magazine and I have been reading almost every word in each issue now, which isn't quite like me to read that much – maybe you guys are just getting better each month!

Joel Meekings, via email

Nobody should really have a say in what you do except you. Desk jobs ARE boring, but the videogame industry is hardly a regular desk job. You're not just pushing pencils around, you're creating something. The Aussie videogame industry has been rocked with a lot of layoffs recently, and there are a lot of game developers pulling beers instead of making games right now, but hopefully this will turn around with the new tax breaks.

As for us? Well, Luke's mum hid the AV cable to his PSone during his HSC. The rest is history. He reminds her of that every now and then.

#### Cuttings

#### **▶** Stay frosty

Mr. Freeze looks so badass in Arkham City. Batman don't f--k with the Freeze! **Joel Janus Garcia,** 

Cool

#### ▶ Driven wild

Just played the *Driver: Sal*Francisco demo. Can't wai

Shane McDonald,

via Facebook

Turn to page 68 to make that wait even harder.

#### ▶ School's in

I hope there is going to be Bully 2 for PS3.

Mathew Cooper, via
Facebook

Us too.

#### **▶** Unjust

Bit disappointed in *Just Cause 2* **Lexie-Batman Taylor,** via
Facebook

[stunned silence]

#### ▶ Mother's Day

The awesome feeling when you come home to a new *OPS* issue, the awkward feeling when your issue is sent to your mum's name 'cause you mixed up the billing and shipping details.

Rory Gardiner, via Facebook

Nah, we always send your mum a copy personally. Say hi for us!

# Official PlayStation Magazine - Australia on facebook.

#### **▼** Storefront

What deliciousness have you bought lately?



Seb Withers
Mass Effect 2

"Had it for PC but the PS3 version is miles better."



Kurt Harris
DIRT 3
"Ripper of a game."



Adrian Emerson

#### Catherine

"Good challenging levels and a suspense filled story."



Michael Bonvino

#### BioShock 2

"If there is anything wetter than Rapture, its my pants!"



Alex Williams made us laugh. He wins.



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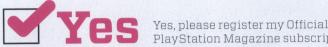
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# incoming

#### This Month

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The Game



ombie lore is so ubiquitous right now the irony is it feels like entertainment media's in the cadaverous grip of a living dead invasion. Shamblers are everywhere, from the idiot box (*The Walking Dead*) to the big screen (take your pick). Even anime (*Highschool of the Dead*), treasured comic book favourites (*Marvel Zombies*), and vintage period fiction haven't been spared (*Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*).

Gaming, on the other decaying hand, has seen comparatively little in the way of wanton rotting apocalypse. Why it's not busy squeezing the fetid milk from this undead cash-cow like everyone else we don't know. Valve's Left 4 Dead co-op shop is sadly closed to the Sony public and the Resident Evil franchise has technically abandoned the killer corpse altogether, so all we get in terms of AAA is Black Ops' Zombies Mode, Dead Rising's increasing shift towards utter whackiness and the one-off Wild West Undead Nightmare.

None are the complete package we crave; the

world on fire, the former loved ones come back to nibble our arteries, total gripping hopelessness.

Polish devs Techland might be onto something, and that something is *Dead Island*. At least, that trailer it unleashed on unsuspecting gamers the globe over back in February would have you believe as much.

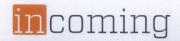
Yeah, that trailer. You know the one.

You probably watched it and sat there for a stunned minute or two like most of us did, mentally piecing together the back-to-front scene of affecting familial horror you couldn't really believe just happened.

As is the style of the times, no gamplay was actually shown. Dizzy excitement soon turned to forum skepticism, belayed somewhat by eventual YouTube evidence of an open-world paradise gone to lurching hell – and hey, you're one of its few survivors. Additionally, the four-player co-op PS3 owners didn't get with Left 4 Dead would be made up to us here, now, on this fictional tropical island called Banoi













# **Zombs on film**

Dead Island's fair dinkum derp is unlikely to get you sweating, so have these ready by the player for some real shambling thrills.

#### Dawn of the Dead

Not Romero's original, Zack Snyder's 2004 remake. That's right. Against all expectations, it was terrifying stuff then and it's still terrifying stuff now. Argh, the baby-zomb scene, make it stop.

# **Zombie Strippers**

Stupid on paper, hilarious in practice. Also gross. Just ask Robert 'Krueger' Englund, who cops death via undead giney. Its Japanese counterpart, the super-subtle *Big Tits Zombie*, is even better/worse.

#### Zombi 2

The best thing Lucio Fulci ever did. He might've been trying to cash in on the success of the original *Dawn of the Dead* with this one's cheeky title (it's not actually the sequel to anything), but by golly is this film great. Shark versus zombie!

# **Braindead**

Peter Jackson's unhealthy penchant for Elijah Wood's ring aside, he's a sick man. As if Bad Taste wasn't messed up enough, he then gave 1992 the goriest zombie flick ever made. Upturned lawnmowers have a million uses.

## **Dead Snow**

Absolute ludicrousness from Norway. Seven ornery students alone in an isolated cabin? Check. The sudden discovery of Nazi gold? Check. The subsequent awakening of Nazi zombies who want their Nazi gold back? Check. It's got it all, really.



"If you get caught unawares **a zombie in a bikini** might latch onto you and go for the throat"

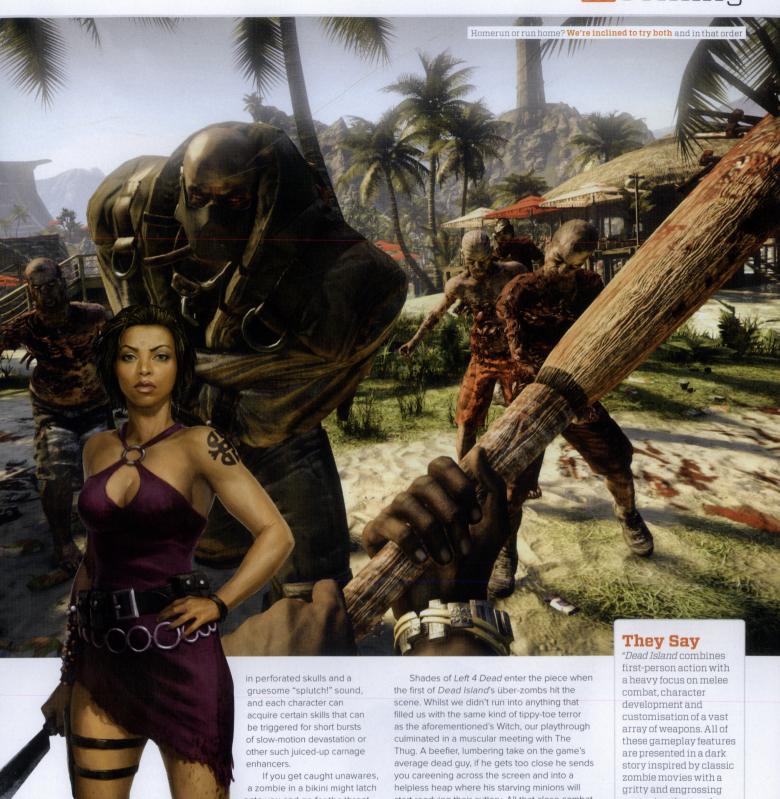
is smarter than the entire universe. However, it's former Sydney-based Aboriginal detective (we're not making this up) Purna who takes the absolute cake here. The mouth on this woman is also the most atrocious of the lot, curiously.

Each one of these hideous creatures specialises in a different type of weapon (blunt instruments for Sam B, throwing weapons for Logan, sharp stabby things for Xian, and firearms for Purna) and each one of them has a completely different skill tree to navigate whenever you gain enough XP to level up. Sounding familiar? It gets cosier. Almost immediately, you'll realise you can rummage through just about anything to find money and random odds 'n ends that you'll use later to upgrade, customise and even create your weapons at sporadically-placed work benches. You'll also need to splash cash to repair them too, because after repeated thwackings, your stuff starts to fall apart. Hello, Fallout 3.

The need to undertake quests edges *Dead Island* even further towards lite RPGdom, with the game's central narrative of "Escape!" flanked by the lesser needs of random survivors you'll invariably stumble across. Miraculously, you're

totally immune to the effects of Banoi's mystery zombie plague, so that means you have to do absolutely everything for everyone and no-one ever helps, ever. It makes for some unintentionally amusing dialogue from NPCs as they attempt to justify why they're sending you out into the death-infested sands all by yourself so you can do something dangerous for them, but ultimately that just means more action for you. This is where <code>Dead Island</code> shines the brightest, but it's not without its flaws, either.

Combat is predominantly hand-to-hand until much later in the game when guns presumably start to become more common, but even then we're told you'll periodically run low on ammo and it's back to ol' faithful (your boat-paddle). If you're worried things are going to wind up a bit stiff and unremarkable, start thinking less like Condemned and more along the lines of Xeno Clash. Although the ragdoll physics can be a bit ropey, beating back rotten bodies with your crowbar is a brutally enjoyable affair. Simple and intuitive, too. Bash, smash, crash, sometimes block. Being able to throw and retrieve weapons frequently results



onto you and go for the throat. In that case, mash whatever buttons flash up onscreen or learn to love your new voice-box. Unfortunately, grappling with the undead via brief QTE is nigh-on unavoidable in the first place because Techland has done that thing where they cheaply spawn zombies behind you from out of

nowhere. As a result, you'll constantly wind up doing the Dead Island tango, spinning around to check your rear for telling smells every time a brawl breaks out.

start readying their cutlery. All that close combat we'd gotten so handy with and suddenly it's no good. What's a former Sydney-based Aboriginal detective to do? That conspicuous propane tank looks pretty explosive. Let's heave it at him and piff a diving knife into it. Voila, Thug ala burnt and dead (again). We'd also managed to just about kill ourselves, too. Good times, good times.

Ultimately, Dead Island is shaping up to be not so much a survival horror title as a screaming mad FPS rampage that will no doubt fare a lot better in its full four-player co-op glory. Its presentation is so bad it'll possibly become kind of endearing, really, which may or may not elevate it to the same kind of cult status crappy horror movies enjoy depending on how willing gamers are to forgive the fact it manages to dispense with any and all of the visceral emotion suggested by that trailer with a few devastatingly silly stereotypes. Loby McCasker

campaign that can be played with up to four players in co-op mode"

# We Say

One foot in the grave and the other on a banana skin.

# Verdict

BADSHAPE NEEDS WORK

# **GOT POTENTIAL**

LOOKING GOOD **GREAT STUFF** SURE-THING



# The Pitch

An FPS remade more times than Madonna

# Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: SHOOTER
EXPECTED RELEASE: 2012
PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER: EUROCOM
PLAYERS: 1-16

In this era of the faceless, voiceless FPS protagonist, there's a certain coolness to be felt from becoming James Bond. Admittedly, Bond's approach doesn't alter your basic gameplay much; 007 fully embraces the one-man-army mentality that the shooter genre idolises.

The biggest difference is you're now an unstoppable collection of polygons who is sex on USB stick. Female NPCs will want to be with you, and male Al enemies will want to be you. And then there'll be a mixture of both who'll both want to be and be with you as well. Apply the day one patch if that's not your thing.

Bond himself

is clearly a character with

benefits

but as

a gaming franchise his 007 brand hasn't always kept its tuxedo free of crud, nor its cummerbund out of the toilet.

One of the more heinous besmirchings was 2004's ex-crap-aganza, GoldenEye: Rogue Agent. The PlayStation faithful from that era will no doubt remember it for what it truly was; a mediocre, money-grubbing attempt by EA to ride the coattails of the N64's legendary first-party FPS, GoldenEye. Fast forward seven years and Activision is now in line to tantalise us with yet another knock-off of that title.

In all honesty, one's enthusiasm for GoldenEye 007: Reloaded curbs when you question its parentage. You're

888888

looking at a game that's
effectively a remake of a
2010 Wii game which
was a 're-imagining'
a 1997 Nintendo 64
game. In comparative

terms that sounds as

appealing as buying a Blu-ray movie of the DVD recording of a VHS tape; however, GoldenEye 007 was surprisingly well received by many critics. Take that into account and this 60fps, high-definition, Move supported retelling of our favourite Bond film suddenly doesn't feel like the worst thing in the world.

For those of you unfamiliar with Reloaded's 2010 source material, Pierce Brosnan's likeness has been given the heave-ho in favour of Daniel Craig's. Likewise, the whole of this retreaded tale now takes place after the Cold War and replaces the dirty commies with the (just as unwashed) Russian Federation.

There's a bizzaro world quasi-familiarity here. James Bond and Alec Trevelyan (played by Elliot Cowan, not Boromir) are on a mission infiltrating a chemical weapons facility in Arkhangelsk, Russia, which is believed to be the source of weapons used by a terrorist cell to target

"Female NPCs will want to be with you, and male AI enemies will want to be you. And then there'll be a mixture of both"

"Miccheck: I dropped your earpiece in the toilet earlier" Nope, still sounds like crap, James

# incoming







British embassies around the world. The mission still goes awry when Trevelyan is caught and not really shot by General Ourumov (Laurence Possa). As before, Bond must track Ourumov's dealings to his (not-so) mysterious boss, and thwart their plan to use an orbital EMP to get rich quick.

Aside from a few location changes, the broad strokes of this spy-fest won't surprise anybody who has worn out their 1997 VHS of GoldenEye. Even still, a healthy number of key details have been tweaked, the most notable of which is tone. Reloaded retells a lot of the action set piece moments in a way that dovetails with Daniel Craig's steely-eyed interpretation of the super spy.

Also, rather than just dropping this size six foot of a game into the size 12 boot of the PS3 architecture, Eurocom has wisely opted to construct a new engine for Reloaded This ground up approach has forced them to rethink a lot of facets of the older code, particularly with texture replacement and geometry rebuilding.

Early reports suggest that the team is adding in new animations, particle and lighting effects and a serious upgrade on the enemy AI. Unlike the dead-menwalking dunderheads in the previous engine, these new goons will exhibit a form of squad hierarchy. Which, in Bond terms, means you can shatter mob mentality by meleeing their sergeant into a tank of ill-tempered, mutated sea bass.

Other noteworthy upgrades for this PS3 version include a Bond-style rehashing of Modern Warfare 2's entertaining Special Ops mode. These side diversions are unimaginatively titled 'MI6 Ops' and the gameplay they offer can be pigeon holed into one of four challenge types. Stealth missions require you to do exactly what you think you'll need to,





stopwatch. Elimination has you doing much the same thing, but with little care for how much noise you make. Wave Defence is vet another time-based challenge where Bond must collect multiple control points from baddies faster than he would STDs

but add in the nail biting element of a

Kevlar beanies were all the rage with Bogan Ops

from the ladies. The last is Assault, but so far Eurocom is staying quiter than the real MI6 as to this exact nature of this.

Moving on into the online space, multiplayer has had its max player count lifted to 16, and the unlock content has seen a similar upsizing as well. Eurocom is promising a slew of new weapons, more ways to customize your agent avatar and a number of match types not seen in GoldenEye 007. Keeping in line with the original GoldenEye's proclivity for couch-based multiplayer antics, Reloaded will feature four-player split-screen adversarial as well. There are no details on whether this PS3 update will re-jig the existing levels to account for the extra players, or if it will include the 'original, original' multiplayer arenas from the N64 title. Given how the aforementioned were absent

from the 2010 release, we're not holding our breath at all

It's important to note that while Reloaded boasts Move and Sharpshooter support, it is still very much designed with standard controllers in mind. Given that Eurocom is a part of the wider Activision family, it shouldn't come as a surprise to know that the control mechanics and general feel of the game heavily mimicks the more recent Call of Duty games. Unsurprisingly, 2010's GoldenEye 007 was cobbled together using a modified version of both the IW engine and the game engine from Eurocom's own Dead Space: Extraction.

The more we study the GoldenEye 007: Reloaded plan, the more we see it as a golden opportunity for Eurocom to prove its next-gen chops. With luck the money men will give the team the time and resources needed to nurture this properly. We're 50/50 enthusiastic on this. Half of everything is luck. And the other half? Fate. Adam Mathew

"The team even brought in GoldenEye screenwriter Bruce Feirstein and composer David Arnold to help realise the (slightly) new approach"

They Say

# We Say

Bruce's input would be a helluva lot more impressive if he wasn't also attached to Blood Stone. It was pretty damned derivative. even for a Bond title.

## Verdict

BADSHAPE NEEDS WORK

# **GOT POTENTIAL**

LOOKING GOOD **GREAT STUFF** SURE-THING



# The Pitch

More marines + more xenos = more epic

# Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: SHOOTER
EXPECTED RELEASE: 2012
PUBLISHER: SEGA
DEVELOPER: GEARBOX
PLAYERS: 1-TBA

tay frosty. Turn on any modern videogame featuring marines – space or otherwise – and you'll hear at least one grunt open his mouth and, well... grunt it. This ubiquitous temperature advice proves just how influential James Cameron's Aliens film has been to videogame shooters. It boggles the mind then to think that it's taken 25 years for us to hear the phrase dropped in its natural environment: a space colony overrun with an alien species whose life-cycle is a very thin subtext for rape.

Moving on to much more pleasant topics, Aliens: Colonial Marines may appear to be a straight up FPS bug hunt, but its gameplay is really something of a mixture. Gearbox Software is promising an amalgam of intense co-op, the occasional

bit of squad-based tactical shooting, a dash of survival horror and even some slower-paced exploration of the derelict remains of LV-426.

"But wait a sec, wasn't the complex liquefied in a 30-megaton nuclear blast at the end of *Aliens*?" you ask, quite perceptively. Gearbox is explaining that away by saying the climactic ground-based nuclear blast in *Aliens* left a cone-shaped crater (nukes are supposed to be detonated in mid-air, you see). That fact has left much of the Hadley's Hope colony, and the xenomorph hive, intact. Convinced? No, neither are we at this point, but we'll have to see if the game explains it more succinctly.

Either way, Randy Pitchford and his Gearbox team has been authorised by Fox to forge the official canon that links Aliens to Alien 3. We're smelling contradictions with it already, but then again we haven't seen the full picture yet. According to Pitchford, "[hardcore fans] will be astonished to see how well it connects together and how true to the canon it is".

Whatever the case may be, this bridging story is shaping up to be one dream of a spiritual successor.

Colonial Marines' story focuses on the USS Sulaco, the battleship that witnessed the last stand of the Colonial marines' 2nd battalion, 9th regiment. After the ship has jettisoned Ripley's lifecraft onto Fury 161 the main vessel receives remote orders from Weyland Yutani to return to orbit above LV-426. By the time the space hulk limps its way back to the scene of the crime a second detachment of "backup marines" (the ones Hicks said would arrive within 17 days) shows up on the USS Sephora.

The nefarious powers that be have told this much, much larger squad of "ultimate badasses" to secure the 'probably-maybeempty' Sulaco, to recon LV-426 and report any interesting findings. Nobody sends the troops a memo about the horny, facehumping E.T.s lying in wait for them. And you thought *your* employers were pricks.

As you probably would have guessed, the defecation hits the oscillation pretty hard. Very soon into the space-based skirmish the Sulaco is forced to make a very inelegant reentry into LV-426's atmosphere and onto the planet itself. Demoralised and extremely disorganized, the survivors of that express elevator to hell must regroup and find a way to survive. To do this they'll need to scavenge what ordinance they can from the derelict Sulaco and to shore up some sort of defense in what is left of the colony.







According to Pitchford this 'last stand' represents Act 2. Apparently we may even be taken nearer to the alien spacecraft seen in the first movie.

From what has been shown so far, Gearbox is very much on track to recreate Aliens' powerful, claustrophobic sense of atmosphere. Many of the iconic sights and sounds are present. Shotguns for 'close encounters' are present and accounted for, as are panicking marines and the butt-tightening bleats of your Motion tracker.

Interestingly, the latter is no longer a fixed HUD element, nor can it be equipped in conjunction with a gun. Your options with it are: knowing the rough direction of where something is (but maybe not being able to quick draw fast enough to kill it). Or, you can hope to be looking the right way when the meat-shredding freaks spring up from just about anywhere (possibly from your own chest cavity).

The visuals certainly look "Aliens authentic", too. Colonial Marines uses a variant on the Unreal 3 engine, called Red Ring, which specialises in dynamic lighting and shadow rendering. This sort of calculated, on-the-fly shadowing, lighting and reflections are absolutely necessary for an atmospheric adventure set in the Alien universe. It's also good to see that the stygian, neon-lit nightmare of the colony isn't sullied by life or ammo HUD elements. One nervous glance at the side of your pulse rifle will be all it takes to see how many bullets you don't have left.

As we mentioned earlier, the standup shooting will often change gears into tense defense sections and the wave-based nature of these events should make for some unique challenges.

Thanks to a nearly impervious enemy type (cheerfully named The Crusher), even the most successful bug hunt could

"One nervous glance at the side of your pulse rifle will be all it takes to see how many bullets you don't have left"

require a tactical retreat behind some bulkhead doors. From there you'll need to form a perimeter and cover all points of ingress with sentry turrets and friendly Al. Presumably, this is where the four player drop-in co-op will come into its own. Gearbox has also done us proud by including two-player split-screen.

2010's Aliens vs. Predator was a misshapen beast that could have been much better. Colonial Marines is showing all the signs of being a labour of love that's based on one of the greatest action films of all time. What's more, the fan service contained within is reading of the chart.

The environments will be littered

with many a heartwarming head nod. Gearbox says we will be able to see where Vasquez and Gorman died, and maybe even kick about Bishop's legs. We may also find the fate of Burke and Hudson, but something tells us we're probably not going to live long enough to make that detour worth it.

Aliens: Colonial Marines is approaching quickly and should be the sort of game no serious shooter fan can afford to ignore. We're monitoring its progress on our motion tracker without too much nervousness at all. A day in this corps will be like a day on the farm. Let's rock. Adam Mathew

They Say

"There are so many neat, fun things we get to do. Like, what happened to Burke? What happened to Hudson?"

# We Sav

Stick to the canon Gearbox and our nerdgasm will shake the very mountains

# **Verdict**

BAD SHAPE
NEEDS WORK
GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD

## **GREAT STUFF**

SURE-THING



# **Darksiders II**

Fear the reaper, baby

The Pitch

War out, Death in

PLATFORM: PS3

PUBLISHER: THQ

PLAYERS: 1

GENRE: ACTION RPG

EXPECTED: TBA 2012

DEVELOPER: VIGIL GAMES

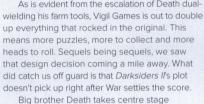
Info

he original Darksiders taught us that War was good for a lot more than absolutely nothin'. It's quite hard to be useless with a teleporting fire horse and a sword that eats chaos. On the other hand, Darksiders II hopes to teach us that Death is indeed the cure of all diseases. You need only take two scythes to the face and see your mortician if life persists.

As is evident from the escalation of Death dual-

this time and, like War, his tale starts as our world gets the bejesus belted out of it by the powers that be. For the most part, not much has changed. You'll still need to saddle up to explore the impressively crafted skeleton of human civilization, and this urban spelunking will earn you a series of hellacious powers.

According to Vigil we'll be able to more finely adjust how Death deals out... himself, thanks to customisable skill trees and modifiable attributes. Also, thanks to a new loot system that lets you rob demon corpses, nothing will be surer than Death and taxes. The seagulling of these many armour drops, along with the various upgrade paths, will effectively let you spec Death towards melee or magic



It's horses for courses and corpses up in here



I'm not going to lie to you, this won't hurt one single bit

The grim reaper conducts business quite differently to his angry-Santa-looking sibling. Vigil has drastically increased player movement speed, which will make for extremely speedy melee-based brawls that laugh in the face of gravity. These ninja combos, along with a series of backup gear items (and a hammer that'd turn Thor's pants into a lightning rod), will be needed in the colossal boss fights. You can also rely on a Ghost claw tool to be a "get over here" introduction-maker, as well as a traversal enabler.

You'll be thankful for its help, too. Darksiders II will contain four massive zones featuring unique art direction and varying environmental challenges. In terms of size, the first major zone will have as much dungeon content as the entirety of the first game. Vigil has also mentioned that as you slash and burn your way through these dungeons and city hubs you'll see cameos of the remaining two horsemen (Fury and Strife) in some capacity.

With brotherly reunions, bad arsed weapons and what sounds like three times the apocalypse to explore, Darksiders II is looking more and more like the type of sequel we'd play to death.

👃 Adam Mathew

# They Say

"We've taken the best parts of *Darksiders* and improved on them with a host of new mechanics and features"

# We Sav

Not becoming this harvester of sorrows sounds like the language of the mad.

# Verdict

BADSHAPE NEEDS WORK GOTPOTENTIAL

# LOOKING GOOD

**GREAT STUFF** SURE-THING



# GO COMPETE



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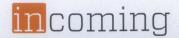
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omparisons to GTA IV are as inevitable as they are outdated. While Saints Row has always been positioned as a competitor to the three-year-old, benchmark-setting open-world action adventurer, it hasn't done so by imitation. In place of satire and gradually introducing players to the game world, Saints Row 2 stuffed you straight into the poo-flinging, naked-skydiving bedlam not long after booting up.

Saints Row The Third wants to make that a tradition, and in the absence of another GTA it's going to be the only contemporary choice for ripping up a city. Volition's reasoning for destruction is if you're going to go nuts you may as well do it as outrageously as possible. Equip an enormous, wobbling dildo and beat your enemy (or bystander) down with the quivering rubber phallus. Dress yourself up in a gorilla suit while the rest of your gang keep watch in superhero costumes. It definitely offers freedom of expression (though we think at the sometimes at the expense of context).

That's not to say there isn't a story. The titular Saints are no longer just a roughly shod gang. They're megastars in their hometown, and like rappers with a marketing plan they've become mainstream. However, a powerful Belgian arms dealer called Phillipe Loren has started a war with the Saints in the new city of Steelport with his own gang, the Syndicate, and the Saints are caught on the back foot after trying to rob one of Loren's banks. Knocking them unconscious and kidnapping them, Loren introduces himself to the Saints in his jet, asking them for two-thirds of their income — they tell him to shove it, breaking into a firefight and then opening up the cargo hold in the maelstrom.

Whilst freefalling you'll punch out falling Syndicate goons as you dodge cars and other debris, rescue a gang member Shaundi, ditch her, get back into the plane you just came from, then re-rescue Shaundi as you touch the ground.

In your turf war with Loren you'll have the chance to destroy skyscrapers or – worryingly

for the censors — capture a rival gang's boat of prostitutes, to either sell the boat back to them or keep the girls and pimp them out to drip-feed cash back into your pocket. Your actions aren't just for "lulz", as there's now a 'respect' system that works like XP, and also affects how people in the city react to you.

More respect means more opportunities to upgrade your weaponry and vehicles, and the improvements affect physical and behavioural qualities of the tools at hand. But then you'd expect that, and it's a sensible approach in a game that's anything but sensible. Each weapon allows you to target an opponent's genitals, though not necessarily with ballistics – you might end up separating the meat from the veg with the stock of your AK, or the blunt end of a pistol. Then there's the infamous motion from a teaser trailer of a man doing the splits and punching another man in the crotch.

What it lacks in sense it wants to make up in fun. And isn't that what you play videogames for? Paul Taylor



# We Say

It's definitely over the top and, like its predecessor, hopes to present a collection of the wildest stuff you can do in a videogame this side of *Just Cause 2*. We just hope it has the technical clout to make it happen.

## Verdict

BAD SHAPE NEEDS WORK

#### GOT POTENTIAL

LOOKING GOOD GREAT STUFF SURE-THING



# PLATINUM DOUBLE PACKS

Prepare For This Year's Blockbuster Sequels - Play The Originals





Uncharted: Drake's Fortune + Uncharted 2: Among Thieves



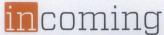
Ratchet & Clank: Tools of Destruction + Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time

RESISTANCE



Resistance: Fall of Man + Resistance 2







# The Pitch

The despair of Half-Life 2 with all the freedom of Deus Ex. and the power-at-vourfingertips of *BioShock* 

#### Info

FORMAT: PS3 GENRE: SHOOTER EXPECTED RELEASE: TBA 2012 DISTRIBUTOR: BETHESDA SOFTWORKS DEVELOPER: ARKANE STUDIOS

e're not sure that's the right genre for Dishonored. Yeah, technically, it's a shooter because it's viewed in the first-person and you do shoot people. It's also an action-adventure title, with an RPG injection. Take the best bits of BioShock, Half-Life 2, Deus Ex and Brink and you're part of the way there.

Dishonored's being crafted by Harvey Smith (he had a creative role in the first Deus Ex and the PC game Thief: Deadly Shadows) and new-to-PlayStation Raf Colantonio (bloke behind Dark Messiah of Might & Magic), two men with extraordinary vision. Choice, freedom, and revenge are their driving principles.

Players take control of a man called Corvo, wrongfully imprisoned for killing the Empress. In his city of Dunwall most of the population are either dead or dying from a plague, and a corrupt Lord Regent wields power. You have a few otherworldly powers to help the resistance wrestle control back from the aristocracy, bestowed (or imposed) upon you by an entity called the Outsider, though you'll have to rely on your natural skills and observation to make it through the world.

modern science fiction than old-school magic While short-range teleportation, stopping or slowing down time, and possessing the body of an animal or another human being are just the beginning of your repertoire, you're also keenly athletic. Corvo can scurry up a rope or chain like a cat up a curtain, as well as double jumping, sprinting and sliding – accomplishing your task will draw on exploiting the environment to your needs. Pay attention to the surface you're jogging on as the sound of your feet crunching down could draw guards to your position.

That's old hat, of course. What is impressive is your enemies may not be as alert if they're talking directly to each other, and if you play it sneaky through the game you're going to draw less heat.

Your actions impact the greater world and the choices you get to make later on, as well as your immediate situation. Hack and slash your way through civilians and guards without blinking to the goal and an option that could've presented itself later won't be available. Thing is, you won't know you never had the opportunity, and that's rather exciting.

Balancing choice with a guiding hand is a struggle. Players crave freedom to do things just how they want, but if the journey to the end credits is too slack they may lose their direction and run out of momentum. Throttle the choices even just a touch too much and the game feels like a series of timed button presses without any emotional connection.

Dishonored is treading a fine line between letting players go nuts with a diverse set of tools, whilst keeping the world contained to ensure that they don't lose their way. It's not that you have multiple routes to the same goal, but that you make the route yourself. This is already making steady throbs on our radar. - Paul Taylor

# They Say

"It's improvisational"

## We Say

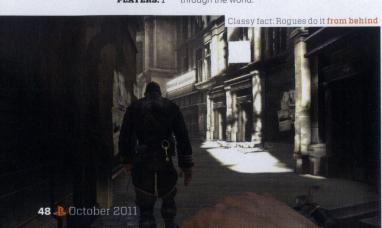
Where other games show you multiple paths and give you the chance to pick one, Dishonored shows you the start and the end. That bit in the middle is totally up to you.

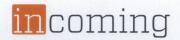
# Verdict

BADSHAPE NEEDS WORK GOTPOTENTIAL

# LOOKING GOOD

GREAT STUFF SURE-THING





# Also inbound



#### Journey

FORMAT: PS3 GENRE: ADVENTURE EXPECTED
RELEASE: LATE 2011 DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
DEVELOPER: THATGAMECOMPANY PLAYERS: 1-TBA

Well, here's a neat experiment. Essentially a simple adventure in which players guide their spindly-legged characters across sand dunes to a huge mountain in the distance, *Journey* is basic enough for anyone to play yet will shatter your expectations of what usually comprises a videogame.

The HUD's gone and the instructions are minimal. You're expected to figure out where to go and what to do with the strange scraps of cloth that float in the air, and also how to exploit your powers.



#### F1 2011

FORMAT: PS3 GENRE: RACING EXPECTED RELEASE: SEPTEMBER 23 DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS DEVELOPER: CODEMASTERS PLAYERS: 1-16

F1 2011 is harder than a woodpecker's lips. There's a neat little sequence where, if you're retired from a race, your driver storms back into the garage, knocking the camera out of his face with his hand as he huffs past.

We saw that a lot.

The preview code we've been playing needs a bit of clean up work but the atmosphere's been cranked up a few notches and the sense of speed is off the chain. We doubt you'll be able to go back to *F1 2010* after this.



#### Star Trek

FORMAT: PS3 GENRE: ACTION-ADVENTURE
EXPECTED RELEASE: TBA 2012 DISTRIBUTOR: TBA
DEVELOPER: DIGITAL EXTREMES PLAYERS: 1-2

Another movie tie-in, more baited breath. Exhale, slowly, though. Rather than spinning off from the source material this will fill in a story gap between the 2009 J.J. Abrams movie and the 2012 sequel.

Makes sense, we reckon, though canonical, silver screen purists might chew their fingernails over what they might miss out on. However, Riddick did it to no detriment. Synopsis? Spock and Kirk buddy up in a lens flare-heavy adventure that only relies on your ability to enjoy a good yarn. Set your phaser fingers to 'crossed'.



#### Far Crv 3

FORMAT: PS3 GENRE: SHOOTER EXPECTED
RELEASE: 2012 DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: UBISOFT MONTREAL PLAYERS: 1-TBA

Ubisoft released a bunch of new screenshots at gamescom of its increasingly lush-looking shooter. There's a stark contrast between the shiny, high-contrast environments and guns, and the insane, murderous intent of this island's de facto rulers.

Insane bad-guy with a Mohawk hair, Voss, is further cementing himself as The Most Evil Guy on the Planet as executions and drowning are his modus operandi — we can already attest there hasn't been another game that sparks vengeance like this. Get ready to jungle boogie.



The Adventures of TinTin: The Game

FORMAT: PS3 GENRE: ACTION-ADVENTURE
EXPECTED RELEASE: LATE 2011 DISTRIBUTOR:
UBISOFT DEVELOPER: UBISOFT MONTPELLIER
PLAYERS: 1

While this TinTin title is being developed to coincide with the new Spielberg movie, it's a welcome change from the usual movie-game dross. In fact, it looks really, really good.

It's helped a lot by the gorgeous graphics and the gameplay that'll flex your brain, as you try to outsmart enemies rather than defeating them in direct confrontations. There's even co-op, and non-fans of the Belgain reporter should check this out.



#### FIFA 12

FORMAT: PS3 GENRE: SPORTS EXPECTED RELEASE: SEPTEMBER 29 DISTRIBUTOR: EA DEVELOPER: EA CANADA PLAYERS: 1-22

It's the same old tune. EA Canada has taken the world's best-selling sports game and spent 12 months making it better. And it *is* better.

FIFA 12 immediately feels different. The pace of FIFA 12 is unlike FIFA 11; you're not just sprinting and sliding everywhere, you're playing around with speed. You're exploding in space and you're protecting the ball when cramped. You're containing players until play breaks down rather than running like a missile at anyone with the ball, because impacts matter. Thumbs way up.

# Need for Speed The Run

FORMAT: PS3 GENRE: RACING EXPECTED RELEASE: NOVEMBER 17 DISTRIBUTOR: EA DEVELOPER: BLACK BOX PLAYERS: 1-TBA

The Run is the first in NFS's 17 year history that's actively trying to maintain a blockbuster persona, weaving together races and intense action-based set pieces. We love the premise — a race spanning over 4500 kilometres (with 300 actual kilometres of road) from San Francisco to New York City in a stack of hot cars. With a few hundred competitors, it's sobering seeing yourself claw up from 170-something to 160.

Cars, though, feel heavy and artificial, needing a good squeeze of the brake to sensibly make it round corners when you otherwise assume they'd drift like a cat on ice. It's definitely nothing like *Hot Pursuit* in terms of handling, but it's even less like *SHIFT*, leaving *The Run* as a strange, clunky hybrid.



# Love is a BATTLEFIELD

Cologne, Germany: 50° 56' 0" N / 6° 57' 0" E

17.08.11 23:48 Sender: Nathan Lawrence

Infiltrated Europe's largest gaming expos gamescom. Have spent the day with Battlefield 3.

Initial intelligence proving correct. Strength even greater than expected.

Call of Duty doesn't know what's about to hit it.

Full report follows.

End transmission\_■





t's been a few months since we checked the news reports from the frontline and a lot has happened since we last took a look at Battlefield 3 through a 12x scope. An exclusive alpha testing phase has been and gone, the October release date has been blasted onto gaming calendars, and DICE has announced its September beta offensive.

We had hands-on time with some exclusive content from the game, and sat down with Karl Magnus Troedsson, general manager at DICE. We asked what PlayStation 3 owners can expect from the hotly anticipated first-person military shooter that EA believes has *Modern-Warfare 3* defeated.

# German efficiency

While America may be able to lay claim to the biggest and flashiest games event of the year, E3, the Germans have bragging rights over the most practical – gamescom – with a solid emphasis on hands-on time and intimate interviews with some of the big players.

DICE was, of course, present this year and had the honour of closing the 'day zero' EA conference with a bang. While certain other stage presentations were a bit 'meh' in their offering, *Battlefield 3* had the right amount of oomph to warrant a deserved acclamation from the hundreds of attendees. The all-new cooperative facet of the game was revealed

– a unique offering by Battlefield standards and a different flavour to the Onslaught Mode DLC – much to the appreciation of the crowd. Best of all, it was played out live on the PlayStation 3 version of the multiplatform title.

# A joint effort

Troedsson was joined onstage by Patrick Söderland, CEO of DICE, for the live play through of an infantry-focussed map. The setup for the map was simple: a high-ranking officer in the PLR wants to leave the dark side and needs a Marine escort back to the green zone.

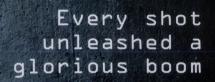
We confirmed later on in our interview with Karl Magnus that the cooperative mode is separate from the campaign and only offers support for two players. Anyone hoping to play through the squadbased campaign with their buddies should stop holding their breath now; alas, we have. Back on stage, Troedsson and Söderland got their war faces on before launching into the night-time mission.

Talk it up a boys
What became abundantly clear early on is how important it is to communicate with your teammate. As the DICE duo attempted to approach the initial section stealthily they were in a constant dialogue, planning their moves in a real-time chess fashion.

"Two guys on the left; I'll spot 'em. Three, two, one. Shoot. Okay. Hang on, I'm gonna pick up the shotgun."

Troedsson took point, with his no-questionsasked boomstick, while Söderland covered his arse. The duo failed to take out a judging security camera that led to the abandonment of their attempt at playing it Sam Fisher-style. It was time to go loud.

Of all the impressive features of the co-op presentation, the one thing that shouts the loudest to be noticed is the weight of the shotgun. Every shot unleashed a glorious boom that dishes out a satisfying amount of short-range death certainty. It's a basic thing, but DICE continues to show how seriously it takes the sound and feel of its armaments, and it marches a long way to creating all-important player immersion.



"You go this way. I'll go home"



## Our turn

Less than 24 hours later and it was our turn to take the reins for the same cooperative level. Like feuding lovers, there was no conversation with our preselected co-op partner and, even though we'd seen the section played before, it emphasised the importance of same-page communication. He died, we died and each death highlighted the potential payoff when playing with a conversational buddy.

Our demo guide told us that the game was running on alpha code, but two things stood out as potential ugliness for the console iteration of Battlefield 3: stupid Al and an abundance of surprisingly bland textures. As Söderland had expressed his lack of care about enemy Al in the past, we sought Troedsson's perspective on the ugly textures.

# The ugly truth

After we confess our concerns with the irregularity of bland textures next to attractive Frostbite 2 powered effects and sexy weapon models, Troedsson offers us his frank perspective.

"Game development nowadays is a lot about smoke and mirrors," he says. "So you have to look at what's important for the player. What are they going to be looking at? Okay, the gun.' They're gonna look at that all the time, so let's make some extra effort on that and make sure it looks really good. But we have some tricks up our sleeve when it comes to Frostbite 2 that we're now using. We can now stream in and out and have more things on screen at the same time; we can have high resolution stuff and then dump it out of memory."

"One of the key things that I actually strongly believe will make the console versions look really, really good compared to what we've done before is the dynamic lighting. That is still present on consoles, muzzle flashes will actually light up the environment."

# Training grounds

We were curious as to how the cooperative play mode tied into the overall structure of the game. As it turns out, it's a bridge between single-player and the potentially daunting emphasis on competitive multiplayer.

"I feel that some people can be a bit overwhelmed when jumping into multiplayer and I'm this kind of player as well," says Troedsson. "I like to play the single-player campaign first and then move into multiplayer. If we can then have people playing single-player and then some co-op and then feel armed and ready, "I know all the controls, I'm



A Just browsing
To emphasise that DICE
has a passion for its
console audience, Troedsson
explained an all-new
addition that was the result
of community requests: an
in-game server browser.

"We are going to ship the game with a full server browser on console. That's something we've never done on a console before. We got this very loud and clear from the community, but they want to be able to handpick or really nitpick which server they get into. Naturally, there will be a quick play option as well, but you will have more control over where you actually play."

Six cooperative levels [will] focus on the different combat facets of the game in both infantry and vehicular forms "Damn it, don't go down on me, soldier! At least not out here, in this alley where everyone can watch"

really good at this, now I jump into multiplayer.' Then we have succeeded because then we have eased people into the experience."

Battlefield 3 is set to launch with six cooperative levels that focus on the different combat facets of the game in both infantry and vehicular forms.

"What we showed people here, at the press event, was an infantry focussed map with tight urban environments," says Troedsson. "But there's gonna be other co-op missions, for instance, where you or I could get into a helicopter together. I would be piloting and firing the main rockets, you would be the gunner with a 180-degree cannon and you could spot people and take them out and this kind of thing.

# Platform love

After experiencing a new 64-player Conquest map on the PC version of *Battlefield 3* (it maxes out at 24-player multiplayer on consoles) and bathing in the subsequent prettiness, it was difficult to shake the feeling that the PlayStation 3 iteration of the game wasn't receiving the right amount of love.

Troedsson is quick to address this concern.

"We are very dedicated to ensuring that none of the versions of the game are actually a port of another one," he says. "So we're looking at the PlayStation 3 and the Xbox 360 and saying, 'Okay, what can we do best with these consoles?'"

"It's hard, basically, just from a time perspective. We've had so many people just working on it, so that's one of the challenges. The good thing is that we have done several PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 games in a row, so we have a lot of experience and developers who really know and specialise on the PlayStation 3, for instance. So they can go in and they can look at, 'Okay, we have this on the PC. How do we get that to fit into the memory of the PlayStation 3, etcetera.' And naturally the PCs are more powerful, but I strongly believe that the PlayStation 3 is going to look absolutely amazing."

# Borderland security

The new playable Conquest map on offer was called Caspian Border, a long-range and open map that favours vehicles and snipers. Interestingly, because

of the open level design, destruction possibilities were reduced to demountable buildings, trees and those flimsily-made wire fences that can be destroyed with a single knife swipe. Battlefield 3 handles exactly like Bad Company 2, and in no way is that a bad thing. While the vehicles – both ground-based and aerial – had obvious dominating potential on this map, we spent most of our time on foot, getting caught up in some seriously intense shootouts.

We were initially concerned at how well aerial vehicles would work on a 64-player map that's been shrunk down to a 24-player-friendly size for consoles, but Troedsson was eager to assuage our fears.

"There is an area of operations where infantry and vehicles can move around; the jets and the helicopters have a bigger environment that they can roam in," he says. "They can fly out, make a turn and then make a pass."



The new suppression mechanic is only the beginning of the range of clever little touches



Single-player secrets

Even though the gaming world's introduction to Battlefield 3 was via the single-player campaign, DICE is still staying mum on the specifics. So far, we've pieced together that you'll change character perspectives at least three times, and Troedsson had this cryptic addition.

"We haven't announced too much about the singleplayer just yet, but I think when people play it, a lot
of people will see that there are a lot of modern-day
shooters, but we have a different take on storytelling
and tempo and dramatic curves and how we present
characters and these kinds of things."

Caspian Border is clearly targeting future aces and will be an obvious favourite for any budding flyboys with egos writing cheques their bodies can't cash.

# A touch of class

All Bad Company 2 classes make a return in one form or another, with the major exception being that the basic soldiers have swapped their ammo packs for defibrillators and the heavy machinegun-loving medic has picked up the dropped ammo packs. This is a minor change that is initially jarring for Bad Company 2 veterans but makes perfect sense after you get past the initial shock. It makes more sense for the support class to carry and distribute ammunition when they use weapon types that chew through hundreds of bullets. In fact, Battlefield 3 encourages support players to be trigger happy thanks to the new suppression mechanic that makes it difficult for enemies to accurately return fire and rewards you with suppression points.

# The little things The new suppression mechanic is only the

The new suppression mechanic is only the beginning of the range of clever little touches that help *Battlefield 3* to set itself apart. Vehicles are disabled before they explode, giving the occupants a chance to escape explosive demises; red dothappy players have their ease-of-aiming balanced out by a red indicator that gives away their position when targeting an enemy's head; and engineers can equip torches to temporarily blind enemies during frontal assaults. One of the more refreshing updates to the levelling system used in *Bad Company 2* is the inclusion of genuine incentives to rank up.

"At about rank 25 in Bad Company 2, it just went



'DONK' and stopped," says Troedsson. "That was one of the things we were all very unhappy with. So we've made a very conscious effort now with a persistent system in *Battlefield 3* to change that. So there's gonna be a whole lot more things to unlock throughout the full persistence of the game."

# Your chaff has flare

While infantry levelling was part and parcel with Bad Company 2's online component, Battlefield 3 is set to include more than just weapon unlocks.

"Levelling up will give you access to optics, different attachments for the weapons, laser sights, gadgets, weapon systems on vehicles, there are so many things in the game," says Troedsson.

On the topic of vehicles, the Battlefield debut of jets on consoles is complemented with a range of upgrades; and not just the passive variety (a la, Bad Company 2). You'll be able to unlock advanced weapons tracking systems, countermeasures and a whole lot more as you prove your worth in the skies.

# Keeping it real (or close enough)

There seems to be a real emphasis on realism, particularly with physicality and movement, so how does DICE balance realism with the fun?

"It's a very thin line to walk," says Troedsson.
"Actually, our goal isn't to create realism. The word
we have up on the wall is 'authenticity'. Because
it's about what you perceive as being real; this is
how I perceive sitting inside an Abrahams tank or
whatever. It doesn't have to be exactly like the real.

"To us there's a difference between those words. To us we're not creating a simulator, we're creating a fun game. We're not creating a realistic game, we're creating an authentic game that is fun to play. So that is very important for us, an example. We can't have the jets fly at proper jet speed. That would mean ZOOM and they're gone. And they would just drop laser-guided bombs and everyone would die immediately. That would break all the fun. So we have to slow them down to unrealistic speed levels to make the whole system work; the whole rock, paper, scissors design system that we have."

## The war of the 3s

Battlefield 3 and Modern Warfare 3 are going head to head before the year is out; we ask for Troedsson's thoughts on the Activision dig at Battlefield 3 for its 30 frames per second rate on consoles. He's more than willing to oblige.

"First and foremost, it's not a technical problem," he says. "We could easily make a 60fps game with Frostbite 2. But we are putting priorities on scale, large maps, destruction, vehicles and 24 players on console. We do so much more than what they [Call of Duty] are doing. And in our mind, 30fps suits us very well. We have a slightly slower pace, which fits this as well. Our game is a little bit less twitchy, which also fits that 30fps."



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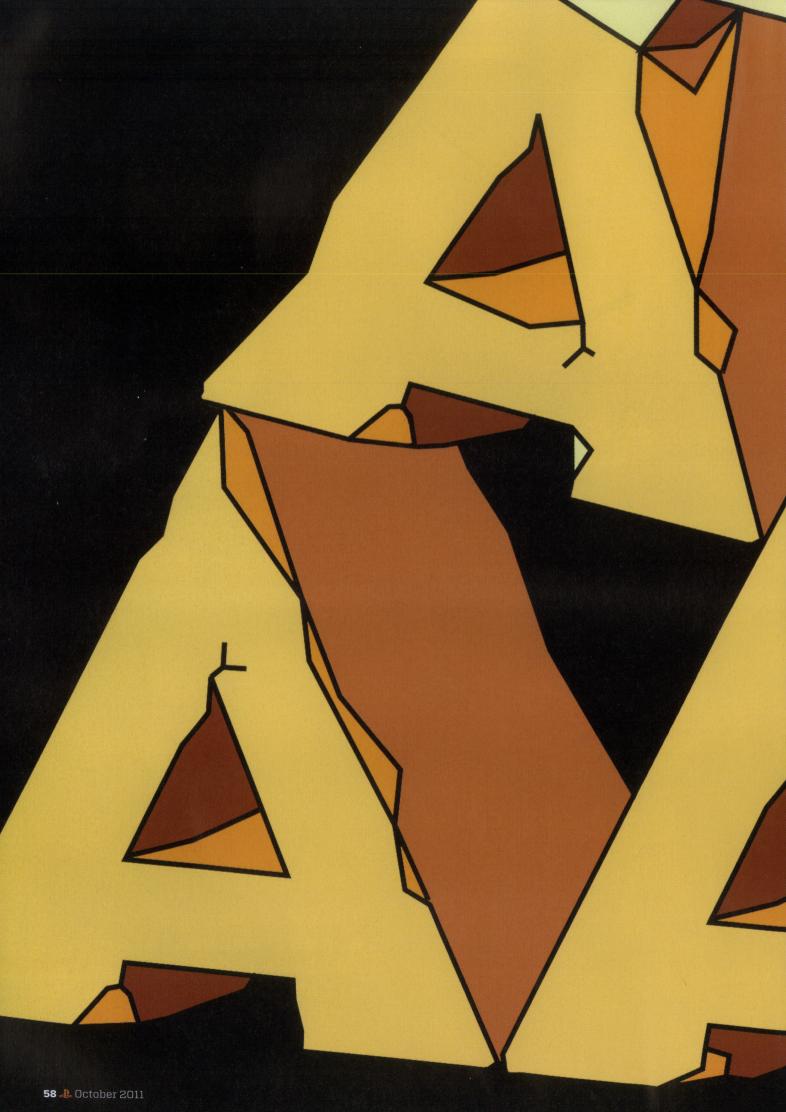
So how closely does DICE analyse the competition? Are there any sorts of things DICE has learnt from them and said, 'Okay, they've done that better and we do that better than them.'?

"They do a lot of good things," says Troedsson.
"But we don't break it down and say we're going to copy that feature. And I bet you they don't do the same with our game as well. We are proud, they're proud, we're all focussing on making our experience from that point of view."

With less than two months to go before we get to see EA put its money where its mouth is with Battlefield 3, the game is shaping up to be a contender for the first-person shooter crown.

Hopefully it's not too late for a bit of spit and polish in the visuals department and perhaps even some new brains for the Scarecrow-esque AI. If these two concerns can be addressed, DICE will be offering up an attractive shooter proposition that may well be nigh impossible to ignore.





# The end of TRIPLE-A GAINES

The games we play and the way they're made is changing. Notable studios are closing down while mobile gaming and Facebook titles are increasing in popularity – and making a lot of money.

How is gaming going to change?

Why should studios plunge into developing high-risk titles if customers are content playing games that cost \$2 or nothing at all?

Will the games you and we traditionally love and play still be made?

What does this mean for the future of PlayStation?

Words: Paul Taylor



wallet-fattening return on their investment. ace it: the gaming landscape is changing. Studios are under Nor are they afraid to can projects increasing pressure to deliver shut down studios that are perceived triple-A games that are going to score in to be under performing. Activision cancelled production on *True*Crime: Hong Kong back in the high 80s and above on Metacritic and, crucially, generate sales to ensure their franchise continues. February (it's since been picked There's a lot of risk involved when up by Square Enix, see page 11 for more) as, in the words of millions of dollars are being spent, Publishing CEO Eric Hirshberg, and publishers are nervously pulling at their collective collars as "in an industry where only the best games in each category they monitor sales to see if they're are flourishing, to be blunt, it just going to get a wasn't going to be good enough." The

publisher also closed Bizzare Creations, who only produced two games, *Blur* and *James Bond 007: Bloodstone*, after Activision bought them.

THQ's latest Red Faction title, Red Faction: Armageddon, suffered disappointing sales, and the franchise has been shelved along with the MX vs. ATV series. MX vs. ATV Alive sold less than 100,000 copies in its first 10 weeks on sale around the world, and along with mediocre review scores prompted Brain Farrell, the publisher's CEO, to say in a press release that THQ will "concentrate on fast growing digital business initiatives such as social games, mobile and tablet-based digital entertainment." Specifically, this means Facebook games and mobile games on Android and iOS.

Such an approach makes fiscal sense: mobile and games and games on Facebook are enjoying enormous growth. Facebook title *CityVille* by Zynga has sat on the top of the charts for over six months, attracting roughly 80 million players every month. Infamous mobile app Angry Birds has sold over 100 million copies, netting a revenue of approximately US\$70million since its initial release in December 2009. It only cost US\$140.000 to make. Compare that to Modern Warfare 2 launched in November 2009, has raked in over \$1 billion. That game is a juggernaut, backed by a massive marketing campaign, support in the press and countless opinion pieces. Assassin's Creed II, on sale around the same time period, has shifted

roughly 9 million copies worldwide.

EA, a company with a swag
of genres and franchises in its
stable, also see merit in the mobile
market, having recently bought
development studios PopCap and
Firemint. PopCap has a string of hits to
its name, including Plants Vs. Zombies,
Bejeweled, Zuma and Peggle. Even if



you've never played these games, you've heard of them. According to data supplied to us from PopCap, they've sold over 50 million copies of *Bejeweled* across all platforms, generating US\$350 million.

Firemint, an Australian studio based in Melbourne, are the creators of Flight Control and Real Racing. They stated on their blog earlier this year that they have sold more than 3.8 million copies of Flight Control on iOS from March 2009 to January 2011. Such massive numbers from both of these developers is evidently very attractive to a publisher, and it demonstrates that the studios know how to create content that's going to sell.

In an interview with *Gamasutra*, Barry Cottle, executive VP of Electronic Arts Interactive (EAi), said "there are shops out there we see where the motivations align and there's a great cultural fit, and Firemint was one of those for us. It brings that creative talent – and particularly, that kind of mobile-centric talent, so we can begin to develop our brands in the marketplace." EA also bought Chillingo,

the company who published *Angry Birds* and *Cut the Rope* – another clear sign that EA is serious about making a dent in the mobile market.

"Mobile games are already evolving," says PopCap's Senior Director of Product and Business Strategy - Mobile, Giordano Contestabile. "What we are seeing right now in the market gives a good indicator of what's to come. At a very high level, the trends that are succeeding in reshaping the mobile games landscape (and the games industry as a whole) all involve making games more accessible and more easily enjoyable by a wider audience. I'd say that, overall, the major shift that's being driven by mobile gaming is the fact that we're going from an addressable base of maybe 100 million players (the "core" market, now a niche), to one that's several times the size and should soon reach 1 billion users in size, based on smartphone sales volume projections."

There's more. Mike Capps, the president of Epic Games is questioning the future of home consoles entirely after

the next generation. The Bulletstorm and middleware developer is more concerned with the sheer power of mobile handsets than successive generations of home consoles. Speaking to Gamespot, Capps said, "you see [Epic Games] experimenting some in the mobile space, partially because that's where the developer base is moving to. It used to be [developers] just wanted an iPhone port, and now they just want an iPad SKU as their main SKU, and we're adapting our technology to meet those needs. We're definitely experimenting in those spaces, and we'll be doing some interesting things in spaces other than pure HD AAA console gaming."

In a subsequent discussion with Industry Gamers, Capps said "look at the ridiculous acceleration of [mobile] hardware and technology...If you watch where the gamers are going that's where they are [playing games on mobile devices]... Your iPhone 8 will probably plug into your TV, or better yet, wirelessly connect to your television set to give you

In 10 years, the notion of buying a separate, expensive device to play video games on your TV might seem as antiquated and pointless as the idea of buying a PDA is today. GIORDANO CONTESTABILE

# Why would a traditional gamer suddenly completely switch to smartphone gaming, never to return? ANTONY DOUGLAS

that big screen gaming experience with good sound. So really, what's the point of those next-gen consoles?"

Contestabile shares Capp's view on this. "In 10 years, the notion of buying a separate, expensive device to play video games on your TV might seem as antiquated and pointless as the idea of buying a PDA is today [versus a smartphone]," he said. "Videogames may well exist as channels on your TV, or as services you subscribe to that you can access on any number of personal devices: your phone, your tablet, your laptop, your television."

It's a substantial shift. Yet there's also plenty of evidence from developers, publishers and other industry heavyweights who say we're in no danger of never playing another blockbuster on our home consoles.

For one, the experience of playing a game on a handset compared to a flat screen just isn't the same. Changing the way you play games requires a fundamental shift beyond the convenience of having a smartphone in your pocket — and we, as gamers, know what we like.

"This all assumes that one market is eating into the other," says *Game Informer* editor Chris Stead. "I am not so sure there's any big crossover. People who may have never picked up a controller, regardless of how rad *Uncharted* is, no doubt make up the bulk of the mobile and casual market — so it's just more people, not less of some and more of another."

"Why would a traditional gamer suddenly completely switch to smartphone gaming, never to return?" questions Antony Douglas, Square-Enix Europe Digital Sales Director. "That, to me, makes little sense. Their time might be spent playing games across wider platforms but the love of big screen gaming doesn't just disappear – do people suddenly stop loving movies overnight and only ever decide to just watch TV?"

Feargus Urquhart, CEO of Obsidian Entertainment, shares the sentiment. "I think about what people said the impact of DVDs would be on the movies. [The assumption was] that people would stop going to movie theatres and only watch things on DVD in their homes. That certainly didn't happen and movies in the theatres [generate more box office revenue] now than they did when DVDs first came out. This relates to games in that, I think, we all like the big events - the release of the next Transformers movie, the next Harry Potter, etc., so why shouldn't the game industry have those same sorts of things? It should and, in my mind, that is the release of the next Elder Scrolls, Mass Effect or Call of Duty.

"But, that is not to say that people are gaming in different ways. A tonne of people now play on Facebook, Android and iOS. However, those people are not necessarily the traditional gamers, who will still go out and pay US\$60 for the next great gaming event. In other words, the people who play and buy games has grown and fractured. Some of them sit in the middle, like me, and will play a game on any platform, while others (the more casual gamers) are often tied to a specific platform."

Douglas agrees, "Fundamentally, more people playing more games is a good thing for our industry. Plenty of core gamers will play casual titles on smartphones and browser but that doesn't



mean they'll stop playing console titles, but they may buy less. Our industry challenge is to ensure that the high end demands of this audience is met with truly great gaming experiences... there is no room for filler in the market anymore."

What of the appeal in the price point of mobile games? Glancing over the various smartphone marketplaces shows a glut of games that sell for around US\$1 to provide entertainment.

"Are people playing these games, or just buying them?" asks Stead. "For \$1 you will buy something and use it once, or maybe not even use it at all, and think, 'whatever.' I paid for Angry Birds, for example, and contributed to its 100m global sales. I played it for about five minutes on the bus once and then I never turned it on again. The reality being that when I was in my house, I played my console. So I don't think the \$1 game market is very sticky, I don't care about the brands on it, and I don't commit any serious time to it. It's the Gobstopper effect – sweet at first, then it just sucks."

As we've seen above, sentiment for big releases and console games is still strong. Activision, the world's biggest publisher, are still steaming ahead with triple-A, core console titles. They're not about to invest in games that you can find on Facebook. Activision Publishing CEO Eric Hirshberg said that *Call of Duty* 

players pay more to play online than any Facebook title. He also said "they're also more engaged - the percentage of *Call of Duty*'s monthly unique players that play the game every day is higher than that of the top three Facebook games."

Ultimately, wellproduced games will always be appreciated.

"The market shows that quality games will sell handsomely if marketed and positioned quickly," confirms Stead. "Even relatively new IPs like Red Dead Redemption and Assassin's Creed have passed the magic 10 million sales mark in recent times, proving that the experience of a AAA, couch-bound game has an eager consumer base. It's a desirable space in which to have your brand.



It's the Gobstopper effect – sweet at first, then it just sucks. CHRIS STEAD





UNCOVER THE TRUTH

03.11.11

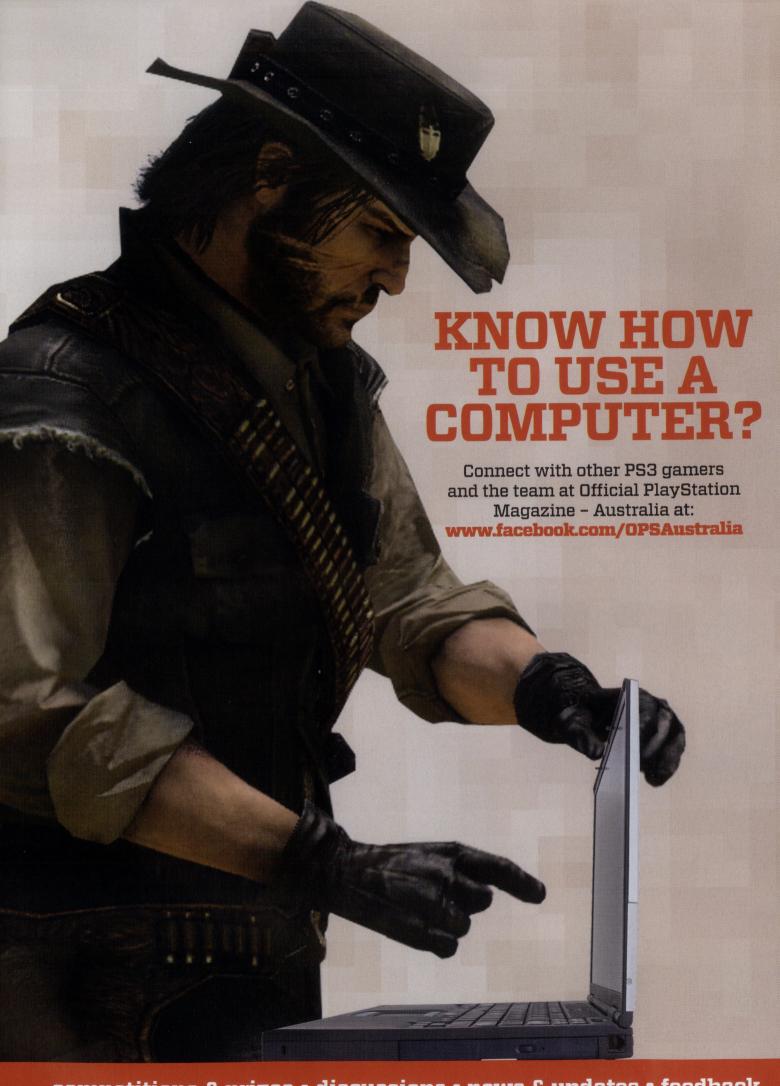
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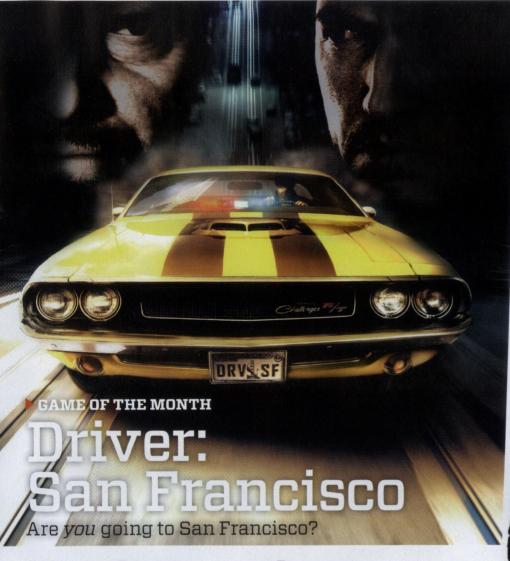


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# inreview



# **Review ratings**

Incredible: Perfection is relative and elusive, and no game will ever be perfect. Our 10 doesn't mean a game is flawless, it means a game has done everything it set out to do in an incredible fashion and thus it deserves our highest possible kudos.

**Excellent:** An outstanding game, either limited by its scope, sequel status (and lack of improvement) or a few too many minor blemishes from being a 10. Likely one of the best in its genre, a 9 comes with very high praise.

**Great:** Still well ahead of the pack in most departments despite a few issues here and there. Thoroughly recommended.

Good: A robust package that does a solid job despite a handful of mild to moderate problems. Enjoyable in parts, just not fantastic overall.

**Decent:** This game will have some noticeable flaws that may make it hard to recommend to those who aren't fans of the genre, but it will do more right than it does wrong. Just.

Mediocre: A conceded pass, if you know what we mean. Half okay, but half-busted.

Might scrape by for fans, but with the quality games we do have, there's no need to drop real money on a game that half sucks.

**Poor:** Anything below 5, strictly speaking, is a fail – but there are degrees of 'bad' just as there are degrees of 'good'. A 4 is unrefined, partially broken and poorly designed.

Very disappointing: Things start to go very wrong here – fundamentally flawed in many ways, boring and close to pointless.

**Terrible:** Nothing good here, and definitely not worth removing the wrapper.

The worst: Reserved for the very worst gaming could ever offer. A broken, offensive mess without a single redeeming quality. If a 10 is better than virtually every game available, a 1 is worse than virtually every game available. OPS has handed out this score only once.

# This Month

**68** Driver: San Francisco

**74** Deus Ex: Human Revolution

78 Bodycount

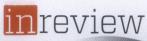
**80** Call of Juarez: The Cartel

**82** Air Conflicts: Secret Wars





▲ We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Sony Bravia for the best picture possible.





# Driver: San Francisco

Faster than a speeding Bullitt?

he Driver series may have been the franchise that kicked 3D car chases in the guts but it's languished beneath the shadow of an all-conquering open-world peer for almost a decade. With Driver: San Francisco Reflections has finally solved this problem.

It's simple really. Instead of making it more like GTA the developer has made it more like the original Driver instead. The result is fast cars, funk music, and no f-king walking around.

The result is a game that's once again unique amongst its four-wheeled competitors. A game that's more like Midnight Club than GTA, but different still.

Driver: San Francisco's ace-in-the-hole, of course, is its bizarre shift mechanic.

We've written about this game at length already so you should know by now that the bulk of the game takes place inside Tanner's head, deep in a coma dream after an accident at the beginning of the game pursuing archnemesis Jericho. From the moment we heard the concept we were sceptical. Indeed, until halfway through the game we remained cagey about it. There was a point in the game, however, where it finally goes from weird to clever. Inception this is not - but things do get satisfyingly quirky before they're resolved.

What shift does, however, is let you play this action-driving/racing game like no other. Say you find yourself in a race, for instance. The car you begin the race in needs to cross the line

first, but that doesn't mean you have to drive it there. With shift you can let the CPU take over your car and instead teleport into oncoming traffic to try and knock out the other competitors. Knock them all out and you'll win by default.

Shift, unless disabled for specific challenge purposes, changes the way you play entirely. One mission required us to shift around the city looking for low cars to drive under articulated trucks in order to defuse the bombs underneath. One mission even required us to drive Tanner's car remotely while we chased it in another car.

Its not a gimmick, it's built into the very fabric of the game. There are the pursuits where you can possess multiple cops pursuing the one target. There are team races where you need to alternate between two cars and have them finish first and second (or just knock out the other two racers, which is actually easier). There's even a tower defence style game that has you using random traffic to ram enemy cars off the road heading towards a static target.

Tanner may be the star but the cars here take centre stage. For the first time in the series the vehicles are fully licensed and Reflections has filled this digital garage with a mix of heritage metal, as made famous by cinema's most classic car chases, and today's most desirable supercars. The cars are lavished with attention and, in fact, we can't decide which view we like best. The chase cam lets you gaze upon the gleaming bodywork and soak up the plumes of tyre smoke wafting from the rear. The cabin view gives you a first hand glimpse of Tanner's incredibly well animated hands (see 'Handy man') and lets you appreciate above-and-









# Make like a banana

Splitscreen multiplayer is a hugely welcome feature in *Driver: San Francisco* and works a treat. There are competitive modes, cooperative modes and also a free ride option. The Tag game mode, perhaps the best online multiplayer mode, doesn't quite work as well with just two players (each can more easily see what the other is doing and it's too easy to camp in an alley with no cars in it for the chasing player to shift into) but Trailblazer is a blast. The co-op modes are good too, particularly the one where both players must escape the cops through a series of checkpoints and vehicle types are changed each time the players reach a set number of checkpoints.

beyond details like the shaker scoop on Tanner's Challenger, or working hood cowls (or 'flappers') on the game's '70 Chevelle SS and Hudson Hornet, or even the fully-operational bonnetmounted tacho on the '70 Pontiac GTO Judge.

Reflections does well to spool the cars out depending on how common they are. There are a few overused car types, like the Aston Martin Cygnet, but even after two weeks of play there were some cars, like the DeLorean DMC-12 or



once you've bought the requisite garage(s) and completed any necessary challenges, but it's nice not to see a convoy of McLaren F1s streaming around the streets at any given time.

A horde of sweet rides would mean squat if the handling was bunk, but the handling has been honed to perfection. The way you can keep a car poised on the edge of control, billowing smoke, through impossibly long powerslides. The crunch and bounce of a car landing from a hill launch. The weight of the nose whipping around in a reverse 180. It's top shelf.

By the numbers *Driver: San Francisco* is a pulsing wad of tightly packed excellence. In a year where, more than ever, gamers have been particularly vocal about anorexic games that can be milked dry in a single sitting, this is a game of impressive girth. It's a veritable runaway Triceratops of content that'll impale you with not only its single-player campaign but its offline splitscreen multiplayer and online multiplayer too.

online leaderboards). There are 50 Activities, non story-based missions broken into three categories: race, action and stunt. There are 80 Dares, one-off tests of skill rewarding insane moves behind the wheel. Then there are the host of multiplayer modes, online and offline. We waxed glowingly on these last issue and will bring you our final impressions once the public are on board and playing it post-release.

Then there are the 120+ vehicles, which is more than most dedicated racing games. Over 50 of them can be on screen at any one time. No game has better recreated a freeway dense with cars than *Driver: San Francisco*. Picture the scene in *Ronin* where the cars are weaving through thick oncoming traffic. It's white-knuckle stuff.

There's the 210 miles of road carving through a city of over 13,000 unique models.

And all at 60 frames per second.

Cygnet, but even after two weeks of play there but its offline splitscreen multiplayer and online The list of things we took issue with is short. Having a DRV SF numberplate were some cars, like the DeLorean DMC-12 or multiplayer too. Lamborghini Miura, that remained as There are 16 Tanner Missions, spread on cars for publicity art and rare as rockinghorse shit. What it across eight chapters, where you play as such is cute but it looks means is that you'll never need Tanner himself and 28 other City Missions a bit daft in-game when (where you play as Tanner helping people every single car has the to whip through an intersection dodging a dozen E-Type Jags. in the city to achieve their various personal same numberplate. Don't Of course, you can aims). There are 31 Challenges with prelook too closely at the purchase and store even the defined vehicles and no shift (these include rear-view and wing rarest cars for your own use 13 Movie Challenges and boast worldwide mirrors either: Challenger 🛂 DKA 421 70 - October 2011





oddly enough Reflections cheats a bit with its actual reflections and you won't accurately see what's behind you.

The ability to completely turn off the HUD was an option we couldn't find; we'd have liked to be able to cruise around without all the onscreen paraphernalia now and then.

Fire and flame effects are a bit lacklustre but explosions are only used sparingly throughout the game. Pedestrians are a little on the simple side too and they'll clip through vehicles if they can't dive out of the way in time. Like Driver games of yore, Driver: San Francisco is not Carmageddon; running down pedestrians would be at odds with the game's attitude. Series creator Martin Edmondson also confirmed with us car manufacturers wouldn't cop it anyway.

The Power Ups (boost and shunt) are exceptionally handy but we never bothered to upgrade them beyond their initial effectiveness yet still finished the game. Things probably could've been a little tougher at times, but there is a bonus recreation of The President's Run mission from the first Driver (plus something else special: see page 86) to keep masochists busy.

Probably the biggest criticism we can level at Driver: San Francisco is the city itself. The game world is built for speed first and looks second. We wouldn't call it bare, but it is plain in parts. It's a world that's designed to

"By the numbers Driver: San Francisco is a pulsing wad of tightly packed excellence "





# Handy man

Driver: San Francisco's cool factor is multiplied considerably by its great dashboard view, specifically by the way Tanner manhandles the wheel and interacts with the elements like horns and shifters.



With a dah of handbrake to get the tail wagging Tanner drifts through corners countersteering through them by winding the wheel around with his palm



A stab of L3 and Tanner will blast the horn. His hand will hover over it for a beat when you lift off so, when you sound it multiple times Tanner's hand doesn't flicker unrealistically.



Slam it in reverse and Tanner will again control the wheel with the palm of his hand. Performing reverse 180s like this will blow a woman's clothes right off



Hop in a car with a column shift gearbox and Tanner will use it properly, as pictured in this '83 GMC Vandura (made famous by The A-Team)



Covering all eventualities the team at Reflections has also ensured Tanner knows how to use flappy paddles too; Tanner subtly plucks next gear with a twitch of his



Big air and a hard landing will wrench the wheel from Tanner's hands. With San Fran's famous hills, big air and hard landings are a regular occurrence.

# inreview









What Hollywood do

Collect 120 in-game collectibles and you'll unlock a series of Hollywood-flavoured challenges inspired by classic TV & movie chases. Bite the Bullet, for instance, puts you in a green '68 Mustang and has you chasing down a black Dodge Charger, just like the Steve McQueen classic Bullitt. White Stripe' plonks you in a bright red Gran Torino and has you pursuing a stoolie driving an El Camino in a Starsky & Hutch tribute. There nods to a bunch of other films and shows too, including The Driver, Gone in Sixty Seconds, The Dukes of Hazzard, Vanishing Point, The Blues Brothers, The Cannonball Run, The French Connection and more. A grainy visual filter, complete with artificial film artefacts, gives each level a great cinema-style look and limiting the traffic to cars of (near enough) the correct era keeps things feeling legit.





be seen while whipping past it at high speed, not scrutinised. Art director Mike Haynes recently told an audience at GDC Europe 2011 that dropping to 30 frames per second would have allowed the team to double its budget for adding detail to the game world. Perhaps then we could've seen a city richer in nuance, like *L.A. Noire*'s Los Angeles (which is capped at 30 frames per second). It's worth noting, however, that *L.A. Noire*'s Los Angeles is a city designed to be explored on foot. *Driver: San Francisco*'s City by the Bay is not.

Other likely victims of the 60 frames per second commitment appear to be weather effects and a day/night cycle. It's a slight shame considering some of our favourite missions of *Driver* games past were set during night, or in heavy rain.

It also would've been nice to see a few more common, older, non-performance vehicles added. Car manufacturers can be bullish to deal with but we feel a few more regular '80s and '90s American sedans would've bridged the gap between the game's range of classic muscle and pony cars and its contemporary boutique exotics. There aren't really enough 'everyday' cars on the road. We wouldn't have especially cared which ones — just any of those big, boxy bastards from the kinds of cop movies we watched as kids, like *Die Hard With a Vengeance* or the early *Lethal Weapon* flicks.

We're picking nits here, however. None of these foibles detract greatly from what *Driver:* San Francisco does well.

If you've ever wanted to drive through a chain link fence. If you've ever accelerated towards a speedhump instead of slowing down for it. If you've ever thought going through a corner sideways would look a hell of a lot cooler than bumbling through it like a normal schmuck. If you've ever sprung a partial over the kind of car that'd make a Prius driver cry into their wheat grass – the kind of car that leaves a carbon footprint so large you could fill it with water and park your houseboat in it.

If you've ever thought any of those things, play this game without delay. Luke Reilly

# **Final Say**

PRESENTATION The car models are ace, the smoke effects are top class and the cutscenes are as slick as a buttered mongoose. The world itself is a little plain at times.

**SOUND** Spot-on engine notes and crunchy effects, good voice acting and a quality soundtrack that includes an infectious rerecording of the theme from the original *Driver*.

controls The handling has been tuned to perfection. Delicately powersliding is very nearly a sexual experience. Set your car to sideways and your balls to stunned.

REPLAY VALUE This game is fat like a spring pig. Single-player (with a New Game Plus mode). Online multiplayer. Splitscreen multiplayer. It's exploding with content.

# **Verdict**

A driving game like no other in a package that just keeps giving. A truly admirable return to form and the first properly worthy successor to Reflections' original pioneering 1999 car

chase classic.



ON SALE NOW!



he Deus Ex franchise is a bit of a stranger to PlayStation, which is a pity. The PC crowd (rightly) went nuts over the ground-breaking original back in 2000 and, while its sequel left a lot of gamers a little cold, the two of them are well regarded as actionadventure cyber punk titles. Human Revolution hits shelves eight years after Invisible War was released, but is set 25 years before the spinetingling original – and it follows suit brilliantly.

What you get is a superbly woven plot that'll hook you into 20-odd hours of play on your first run through. The opening cinematic kicks the game off with ambiguity; a strained conversation between a well-dressed man and disguised figures on a computer screen, hinting at higher powers who have plans for people that have no choice but to bend to their will. What follows is a hash of lies, espionage and techno sabotage that you have to wade through as you step into the boots of Adam

Jensen, the head of security for Sarif Industries. They're a biotechnology firm specializing in mechanical augmentations, capable of replacing most of a human's entire body.

One of their scientists and Adam's girlfriend, Megan Reed, is on the cusp of a significant breakthrough and as you're guided through the labs you get glimpses of powerful tech. A pair of disembodied legs runs in unison with a man on a treadmill. Mechanical arms and hands litter desks, and the lab coats babble about scientific research. Sarif Industries has developed a top-secret project called the Typhoon under contract from the Department of Defense, enabling an augmented soldier to launch steel ball bearings out in a 360-degree arc, decimating anyone or anything unlucky, or foolish, enough to be caught in its radius.

Even your boss, David Sarif, a cunning and charismatic character, has a purely mechanical right arm, and he's excited about a future where

people are able to control their own evolution.

Then Sarif Industries is under attack. You're tasked with sorting it out, and after a couple of tutorials you're left for dead as one of the heavily augmented soldiers throws you through a window and then shoots you in the face. The last thing Jensen sees is Reed being slapped to the ground before the scene cuts to the operating table. He's rebuilt, emerging six months later, physically more machine than man. Reed is missing, and the company is reeling. Many are surprised to Jensen alive, never mind back at work.

It's a powerful opening. Detroit in the year 2027 is beginning to tear itself apart as people begin to question the power that augmentations offer. Civil unrest is brewing and it's only going to get worse. You're just getting to grips with your new body when you're called back into duty. From the moment your first proper mission begins you're presented with choices that will impact your progress and alter the fate of humanity. No pressure, then. Human Revolution is all about story, and every decision you make affects you later on in one capacity or another. Sometimes it's in subtle ways, often intrinsic to the game but ocassionally just to add your own understanding of what's actually going on in the world.

There's a lot to discover if you go picking (and you'll want to go picking), and this in turn is dependant on the way you go about it. While this isn't an open world (rather, a series of self-contained 'hubs' that take you from Detroit, to Hong Kong, Singapore and the very ends of the Earth) you have freedom in how you get from A to B, and *Deus Ex* veterans will see a lot of similarities between this and the previous games in the series.

You could tool up to put a bullet in every guard who gets in your way. The game accommodates this approach and has a weapon upgrade system that'll make a mess of whoever's at the pointy end – it also help





you feel like Robocop gone rogue. However, the shooter mechanics lean more towards competent than desirable; it's not as smooth as something like *Call of Duty* or even *Homefront*, and you'll spend a lot of time in cover waiting for your health to recharge unless you upgrade your armour to take lead-based punishment.

Or you can invest in improving your stride to clear tall objects, striding over rooftops and landing like a cat jumping on a feather pillow. Back doors and secret passageways just need to be found, and often it's a case of shifting a suspiciously placed box to spot a vent you can nip in and bypass the bulk of your troubles.

Hell, you could just hack your way through the game by logging on to security systems to switch off cameras and turn antagonistic bots and turrets against patrolling chumps, or punch your way through walls. Though you're never forced to do things in a certain manner – there is always another way to achieve your goal – you'll never escape the feeling that the designers want you to be a ghost whose existence is never known until you've already left the building.

How so? Most of your XP rewards (which in turn give Praxis points, the currency

for buying augmentations) come

from fulfilling your objectives by not being seen, or even raising an alarm. You might be (temporarily) invisible, but if guards hear your footsteps they'll come looking, expanding their usual route and become 'suspicious'. If you're quick and smart enough you can make a tactical retreat so that they don't see you hugging the wall, thus setting off an alarm and bringing their burly rifle-toting mates into the piece. In this worst-case scenario you'll totally blow your bonus end-of-objective XP reward. And sending guards to sleep rather than killing them also gains more XP.

Observation is key. The world is dripping with details, and it's essential for you to soak it up so you can progress, and also to get a full grasp of what's going on. Blundering into a room either without using a bit of cover or sorting out a noise dampening upgrade is going to send you back to the last auto save.

However, it balances out. Sneaking around and using your fists requires battery power.

Knock an unsuspecting guy unconscious and you totally zap one of Jensen's batteries – and they only recharge if you briefly use, say, the



Power up

There are a lot of augmentations you can upgrade, but you can't get them all. Improve your hacking skills all the way to the top, and it's a good idea to be able to run silently, else you'll spend a lot of your time crouch running – most undignified. Plus, if you don't want to haemorrhage ammo, improve your recharge capabilities and amount of batteries to punch on.

# inreview

# Anatomy of a takedown

Apart from boss fights, it's totally possible to make your way through the game and not kill anyone. As long as Jensen is fully charged you can sneak up behind people and knock them out. Here's one way to do that.



▲ Wait for the prompt to appear, then hit ◎



▲ The camera cuts to third-person, and Jensen approaches...



...and your bloke goes down without raising an alarm. Drag his body aside, too.



▲ Then loot his dribbling body for goodies. Winning!





In the future they will have the innertubes on computered web

dampening aug or the invisibility shield and don't flatten a battery completely. Otherwise you need to chow down on a powerbar and boost your energy. (Amusingly, alongside painkillers, you can top up your health with beer, wine and whisky.) It's often hard to find resources for the stealthy weapons, such as the close-range stun gun or long-range tranquilliser, whereas ammo for the machine pistol or combat rifle is abundant. So do you fill your inventory with futuristic muesli bars or boxes of bullets?

It's a game that constantly makes you balance out the risks and the rewards. You might have a code to get through a door that you picked up from a hacked email, but type it in and you miss out on fleecing more XP from hacking the door. Sometimes you'll find extra credits that can be downloaded while you're hacking, or even an extremely useful Nuke or Stop Worm virus, two programs that aid your efforts in hacking devices. However, fumble the hack, either by being physically found or running out of time as the system you're breaking into detects your presence, you're locked out, the alarm's raised and you're sent scurrying away or into another fire fight.

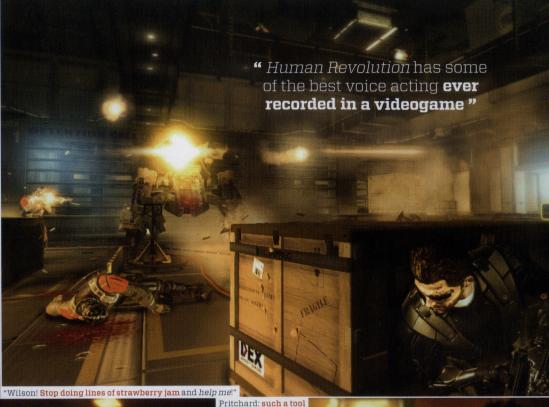
You can also gain info on what to do by listening in on conversations. Guards sometimes

gather in clusters and as they're going over their plans will often spill info regarding who's going to be where, or chat about keeping an eye on a certain door.

When you're in the open there are plenty of citizens to talk to, and every NPC has something to say. Sometimes they'll even have a task, or just a line about how they're too busy to stop. Occasionally these tasks lead you on a path that you'd never thought about taking, meaning that finishing the game two or three times isn't going to be enough to wring everything the game world has to offer.

What's really remarkable is that you can cut out an entire, seemingly crucial, section. We were trying to corner an antiaugmentation author as he gave a speech with hopes of levering info regarding his weaselly assistant, and engaged him in a verbal stoush. A few Mass Effectstyle conversation trees later and we've blundered it. The guards have scoped us out, the author knew we were coming for him so we hit the latest save file and reloaded. On our way back to the author we saw a vent, ducked in and found the guy's computer. We hacked it, and soon had the







# **Final Say**

PRESENTATION You'll feel the grime and LED glare from the stunning environments but grimace at the so-so character

SOUND Superb voice acting all round, save for the odd cheesy line

CONTROLS Play it as a stealth'em up rather than a straight shooter. The cover mechanics take a little while to adjust to but they're solid in the end.

REPLAY VALUE You could be playing this for weeks to come as you discover every permutation. Loaded with trophies, too.

#### Verdict

Bordering on excellent, you'll marvel at the atmosphere and revel in the gameplay in one of this year's best games. Oh, and there's enough space for a sequel, surely.

# The past of the future

If you posses a backwards compatible 60GB PS3 (or one of the 150 million or so PS2s sold around the world). do vourself a massive favour and find a copy of Deus Exon PS2. It's a bit ugly by today's standards and clunkier than the gearbox on your Nanna's car, but it's well worth it for the roots of the story. \$20 and eBay should sort you out nicely.

info we needed to track him down.

It might not sound like a big deal, but it was theoretically possible that we'd just bypassed a really impressive showdown; not only in terms of story exposition but also because it's a sheer joy to listen to Jensen and the supporting cast converse with each other. Human Revolution has some of the best voice acting ever recorded in a videogame. It's passionate, believable, and there's tonnes of dialogue.

As a side note, it'll take a brave or stubborn soul to constantly roll with the punches and not be tempted to rely on a save file to clear up their mess, but we bet that you'll reap the richest experience from this.

Again, back on the streets and you pick up on the civil unrest about augmented people. It all ties in with the Deus Extimeline, and it's one of the game's strengths. All this background info builds atmosphere and you can feel it pushing in from all sides.

Where it lets itself down is with patchy presentation. Environments are near faultless, gloriously fleshed out and full of drama, but you'll be broken out of your spell with really shoddy character lip-synching and sub-par facial textures. Bodies clip through scenery.

They might sound like a petty thing to

needle at the game, but it's truly off-putting. Animations between NPCs are often recycled to comical effect. We watched two Sarif employees talking to each other, and as they stood side by side do a near synchronised conversation shuffle by moving their arms in the exact same way. There's also a weird, flickering shadow that crosses Jensen's chest and face – maybe a day one patch will fix this up – but it stops a truly great game from being excellent.

In the end this belongs on every gamer's shelf. It's a ripping thriller, with plot lines twisting round each other and looping over the top, with various streams running side-by-side competing for your attention. At times you'll get confused by what you're doing, and if it's the right way to go about it.

It's damn easy to get sidetracked, whether it's by accident as you're searching for a way to shut down a camera or avoid guards, or whether it's because you just can't resist flexing your hacking skills. No matter. Despite the flaws this'll be on your mind well after the credits roll. The plot is engrossing enough to make any techno freak froth at the mouth with lust. Human Revolution is a truly authentic Deus Ex game, and a great gaming experience in its own right. Paul Taylor



# Bodycount

A slaughter in which fun is the first casualty

# Play this if you like

CoJ: The Cartel

#### Info

RRP: \$69.95

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: SHOOTER
PUBLISHER: NAMCO
BANDAI PARTNERS
DEVELOPER:
CODEMASTERS
PLAYERS: 1-16

Bodycount lured us in by way of a tenuous DNA link with Black on PS2. If that's your entry angle also, let us dispel that relation right here and now. The only similarities between Criterion's 2006 creation and this fired blank is; they've both got guns in them, they both start with 'b', but Black was easier on the eyes.

It was also a celebration of shooting. A fetishistic shooter whose guns were plentiful and rendered with pornographic attention detail. In stark contrast, *Bodycount* eventually lets you unlock 10 guns total, only offers two per level and

denies you the ability to swap them for the leavings of your foes (even if you're packing a pistol and they've dropped a sniper rifle, or a mini-gun). This anti-kleptomania, combined with near limitless reserves of ammo, makes for very peculiar game design. Without the basic tactical variety of weapon switching, every level becomes an exercise in déjà vu drudgery.

The only thing Codies do want you to scoop up are fields of neon balls, which inexplicably sploodge out of your victims. These ubiquitous, eyesore spheres excel at two things: fueling the four special weapons

on your d-pad (adrenaline, airstrike, explosive rounds and enemy locator), and ruining the gritty warzone aesthetic of the visuals. Frankly, the whole concept is hopelessly inelegant and could have been solved by a simple cooldown mechanic.

Not caring about the pickups is standard procedure here and your blasé attitude will deepen as you realise the story isn't worth giving a rat's about. Bodycount's plot is mind-numbingly absurd, and is spread thinner than sunscreen at a tanning salon. Whoever penned this tripe didn't even bother assigning names to the major players, nor did they give the proceedings a point. You're 'The Asset', working for 'The Network' and guided by [generic female voice here] you must stop 'The Target'. One minute you're fighting low-rent scumbags in Africa, the next it's a bunch of sci-fi bucketheads fresh out of a Power Rangers convention.

Needless to say, these character designs would be hilarious if the blatant reuse of them wasn't so sad. Beyond the rehashed appearances of some mid-boss types, it's rare to see more than three unique-looking enemy characters clogging up a level. By the time you've shot "that African milita guy" — with the same uniform, weapon and identically angled cigarette hanging from his mouth — a hundred times, it's hard to stay enthused.





in some online multiplayer as well. But, as you'd

imagine, it's so hopelessly generic as to barely

warrant a mention. That sentiment is a running

theme throughout this whole sordid mess of a game. *Bodycount* is thoroughly boring ride that

won't challenge your reflexes or intelligence.

hours to get through is the best thing going for it.

Ironically, the fact that this takes under four

Adam Mathew

Some examples that spring to mind include,

a passable (but unneeded) first-person cover

system, a regenerating health mechanic that's

latter has been spruiked as a major feature, but

destructibility witnessed in the Red Faction and

squeamish about using on-screen blood and

a very inconsistent destruction engine. The

can't hold a match, let alone a candle, to the

Battlefield series.

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Short, silly and very

Edge isn't the only game that

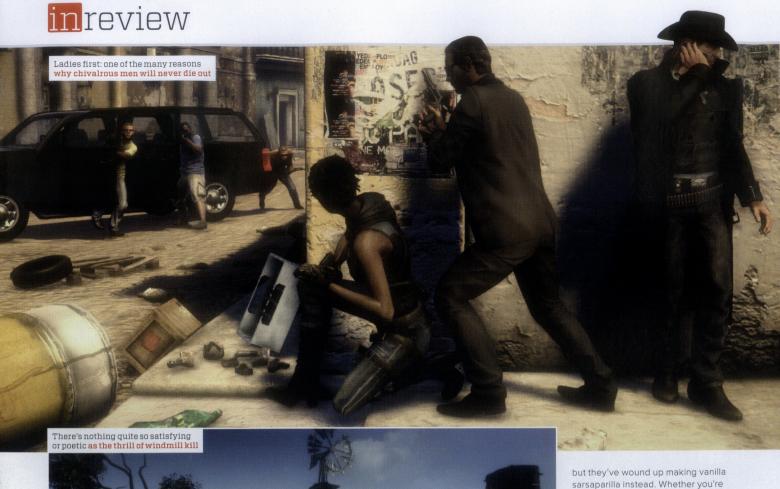
can be beaten

using pacifist

first-person

running

unsatisfying. Mirror's



# Call of Juarez: The Cartel

A fistful of disappointments

Play this if you like

Call of Juarez: Bound in Blood

#### Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: SHOOTER
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTE: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: TECHLAND
PLAYERS: 1-12

egular readers of *OPS* will know that a rootin', tootin' Wild West story is all it takes to set our nether-regions percolating. That said, after playing *Call of Juarez: The Cartel*, we can now give you another factoid to remember: "modern" Wild West games make us feel nothing but dead wood.

With Rockstar all but winning the West with Red Dead Redemption, it's easy to understand why Techland decided to contemporise its IP. The Cartel, as the name suggests, focuses on the war currently being waged by drug cartels, something that is turning America's backyard into a bad day in Beirut.

As such, you're given the choice of three cops who are embroiled in a cross-country investigation of the Mendoza crime syndicate. There's the token Walker Texas Ranger wannabe, Ben McCall (descendant of the previous games' protagonist, Ray McCall). A Halle Berry knockoff and ex-gangbanger, FBI Agent Kimberly Evans. Last but not least there's DEA agent, and insatiable gambler, Eddie Guerra. Unfortunately, no matter which doughnut patroller you choose you're in for the same bad old-fashioned, son-of-aglitch shooting.

Techland has tried its best to season the action with some 'true grit' flavour,

but they've wound up making vanilla sarsaparilla instead. Whether you're unloading assault rifles, or John Wooing folks with dual pistols, the gunplay in The Cartel always feels unsatisfying and anaemic. Your enemies are bullet sponges, iron-sight aiming comes with a weird depth-of-field effect (that looks like your TV is fogging up), and you're constantly made to backtrack through levels. Even the most excitable FPS fan will roll into The Cartel hoping for hardcore narc action and wind up feeling narcolepsy.

A lot of the dreariness comes down to the fact that it takes nigh on a whole playthough before you can unlock a decent heavy machine gun. We get that Techland wanted to curb the armaments towards the Western staples (pistols, shotguns, etc.), but at the end of the day you don't feel like a neo-cowboy, so much as you do a very underpowered cop. Half of a the battle in a gunfight can be with the curious weapon balancing, too. For some reason all of the protagonists can't fire one of the basic pistols without it flipping in their mitts like a epileptic eel. On the other hand, they've got King Kong wrists when it comes to firing a 50 cal. Odd

The action gets even worse when The Cartel decides to cram you into an SUV. Frankly, we don't know what is worse; being forced to awkwardly drive about in a linear fashion with no way to defend ourselves, or to be chauffeured but still desperately trying to swing the camera around to shoot baddies in the on-rails alternative.

Whether they're road-raging or on foot, the cartel goons act stupid enough to make you make you think they're high off their own supply. Spatial awareness isn't a strong suit for your two friendly Al buddies, either, as when they're not impeding your movements in corridors they'll be magically Caspering right through one another. We even spotted instances of them teleporting into existence right in our crosshairs when their buggy pathfinding







code gave up completely. But that's not even the worst of it. Their dogged stupidity becomes a new level of frustrating when you can't shepherd them out of a room and keep them well away from yourself.

Why would you want to be as far away from the friendly Al as possible? Well despite the obvious reason of hatred, it's because working by yourself is a leftover requirement from The Cartel's three-player, co-op mode.

At certain points in each level the three protagonists receive phone calls from dodgy friends begging for an illicit favour. So rather than supporting your other two cop buddies you'll follow a special marker and earn XP by planting evidence, swiping cash, picking peanuts out of poop, or whatever else passes for a nefarious deed nowadays.

Do this in full view of your (equally corrupt) cohorts and you'll be penalised. With a few human allies this sneaky side-diversion is easily the most entertaining and unique thing going for *The Cartel*. However, it is very poorly integrated into single-player. Trying to level up can be downright painful when you have two Al buddies tailing your every move so closely they may as well be growing on your butt.

Speaking of posterior fungus, the Chrome 5 engine really isn't all that much to look at. We saw many a rookie issue, like corpses breakdancing in walls, whole scripted "blockbuster events" failing to trigger correctly (and requiring a checkpoint restart) and a criminal amount of environment reuse. No matter where you look, *The Cartel* feels like it's on the wrong side of a used-by date.

But just as your eyes are wincing, your ears will bleed as well. The dialogue reeks of 'try-hard potty-mouth' syndrome and it's most evident as Ben McCall sprinkles Bible scriptures with f-bombs during the slow-mo ability. This wouldn't be so bad if there were more than a handful of these not-so-penitent sermons. After 10 minutes you'll quick-draw for the volume controls.

Your decision to do that will actually make the story much more bearable, too. All three of the plot threads are as aimless as tumbleweed and thoroughly forgettable.

That being the case, *The Cartel* isn't so much an arresting single-player experience as it is a total bust. It's rushed, uninspired and Techland opting to move the setting forward in time has effectively made this cult-favourite franchise go backward.

Sure, there are some minor kicks in three player co-op, but they're very short-lived and fraught with frustration. Call of Juarez should have stuck to its guns and remained an Old Wild Western. Avoid this like you would the real po-lice. Adam Mathew

# The multiplayer cop out

When it comes to adversarial multiplayer, *The Cartel* isn't worth a few dollars more at all. You get all the basic features (deathmatch, team deathmatch, protect the VIP, etc) and while they're all functional enough, they're hopelessly non-descript. Give it a month and these lobbies will be emptier than a Mexican mesa at midnight.

### **Final Say**

**PRESENTATION** Visuals that are past their use-by date. Barely up to scratch animations.

**SOUND** Insanely repetitive dialogue that is laced with more MFs than sense.

**CONTROLS** Not razor tight, but not too shabby. Default controls are mapped especially awkward.

REPLAY VALUE The co-op is worth a budget-priced laugh. Otherwise, you'll have little desire to replay this as all three cops.

#### Verdict

Buggy, ugly and mostly uninspired. This is how West was lost, pardner.

4





Info
FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: FLIGHT
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: AIE
DEVELOPER: BITCOMPOSER
PLAYERS: 1-8
RRP: \$69.95



#### **Red Tails**

If there are any developers reading this, and you're going to make a flight game, get online and at least watch the trailer for Red Tails. It's an upcoming 2012 movie from Lucasfilm, and the first Lucasfilm production since Radioland Murders in 1994 not to be associated with the Indiana Jones or Star Wars franchises. Red Tails is the story of the Tuskegee Airmen, a group of African American combat pilots during World War II, and the aerial action looks proper bananas. Forget sterile, paint-by-numbers, nondescript-titled tripe like Air Conflicts. Make this.

ome videogames have names that make you suspect all the cool titles have already been taken. Air Conflicts: Secret Wars is one example, a scattergun assemblage of junk words (cribbed from other, better videogames) containing at least one too many plurals and meaning very little. Air Conflicts: Secret Wars is a burst of word diarrhoea separated by a colon; it sounds like it was named by a computer. But we're being petty.

Thing is, everything about *Air Conflicts* seems bent on reminding you as often as possible you're playing a dud – from its bargain bin name to its low production values.

The utilitarian visuals fail to impress and the sound is worse. The dire mixing turns the roar of even a Spitfire's 27-litre, 1,500 horsepower V-12 into a flaccid, barely audible buzz, drowned out by the impossibly awful voice acting.

The dozen or so characters in Air Conflicts are voiced by just four voice actors, meaning many conversations are comprised of the same actor talking to themselves in slightly different accents. On the topic of accents, Air Conflicts features an Australian accent so bad it'd strip the Vegemite off your toast at 100 metres.

The cutscenes between missions are naught but illustrations the camera will pan across a few times in a few different directions. The story seems like a turkey anyway. Set during WWII you'll become French woman Dorothy "DeeDee" Derbec, full-time smuggler, part-time partisan and occasional murderer. There are a few 'flashback' missions to WWI and the skies above Gallipoli as a friend of her father but disappointingly they're nothing special.

Then there are the typos in the loading screen tips, and the mission briefings that simply

couldn't have been proof read. One sortie required us to tail a top secret prototype jet, informed us that *under no circumstances* were we to damage said jet and, in the very next paragraph, instructed us to *cripple the jet* and force it to CRASH-I AND in a forest.

How about gameplay then? One can forgive an overall lack of polish if it's at least fun. Meh. It functions, but the flying itself feels very superficial. It lacks any real nuance and there's no sense of speed to speak of. Bank, fire. Yawn.

Corners are cut everywhere. Landing? Just fly through these glowing rings and you'll be teleported to the ground. Mid-air collisions? Nope. Planes pass through each other like two ghost jocks going for a chest bump. The cockpit view? Dead. Ever seen a pilot wrestle a B-25 around the sky without a single hand on the control stick? We have.

The missions rarely excite (and often confuse: why must we engage in a dogfight with Russian fighters after strafing German ships in a British plane?). Also, story mode is padded out with delivery missions so dull the microorganisms living in the creases of your fingers will die of boredom.

Planes have damage modelling but it doesn't impact your plane's performance and it's far too extreme. Planes remain airworthy long after the damage would have turned you into a sombre letter to your nearest relative and, as such, they can look downright ridiculous flying about.

If you're after a WWII flight game wait for Birds of Steel, from Moscow studio Gaijin, due out early next year. If you can't wait, buy IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey, also from Gaijin, instead. Air Conflicts simply cannot compete with it on any level. Luke Reilly

# Play this if you like

IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey, but you won't like this near as much

### **Final Say**

**PRESENTATION** Basic visuals and lacking polish in every area.

**SOUND** Hideous voice acting and limp sound effects

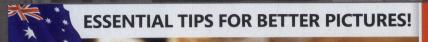
controls The arcade controls strangle you, the simulation controls are anything but and the Move controls aren't any fun.

REPLAY VALUE Boring the first time around with multiplayer no one will play

### Verdict

Promptly blasted out of the sky by its betters. Even ardent WWII flight freaks will be left cold here.

4





# Digital The Macro Issue

# WEIRD & WONDERFU

» Macro as you've never seen it before!

# acro in **motio**

mmunut

High-speed macro secrets to get you shooting like a pro!

# HIDDEN

Photography on a molecular scale!



# **IMPROVE**

» Step-by-step guides to become a macro expert!



PLUS! Wildlife • TtV photography • Still life • Workshops • Photomicrography

SALE

# internet

# NEWS, DLC, REVIEWS

WHAT'S NEW

# PSN

### DEVELOPMENTS

What you can expect to see and play on the PSN

unslingers, assassins, and Ridley freakin' Scott are about to invade the PSN. Rockstar is releasing the multiplayer-based Myths and Mavericks Bonus Pack for free for Red Dead Redemption. It'll feature new, requested multiplayer characters – including a cryptic reference to a 'grizzled ol' gunslinger' – and new multiplayer locations in Deathmatch, Grab the Bag, and Gang matches, amongst others. A firm date hasn't been set, but it will be released during September. The publisher will also release a patch to restore the original settings for the Undead Overrun multiplayer mode.

It's knives out from September 3 – 11, as the Assassin's Creed Revelations multiplayer beta takes place. Note, it's only available for Uplay members and PS Plus account holders. The beta features nine characters, three stab-tacular maps and four playable modes (including the brand new Deathmatch and Artifact Assault).

So how does Ridley 'Blade Runner'
Scott fit into this? The revered director is, along with Will Arnett, Jason Bateman,
Ben Silverman and Tony Scott, creating content for Activision's new Call of Duty:
Elite service. We don't know in what capacity, but this gaggle of directors is an impressive coup nonetheless.

Finally, if you're a PS Plus member, like a bargain and are willing to take a punt on a few games, you can save a bundle of cash on four games, AND get a free game for laying down your money early. Sounds like a decent deal to us. As part of PlayStation Network Play, PS Plus members who buy Street Fighter Ill: Third Strike Online Edition, Deathspank:



The Baconing, Bloodrayne: Betrayal and Renegade Ops before 20th September save 20 per cent off the purchase price, and also get Payday: The Heist for zero dollars

Also, if you're very, very quick (or subscribe to the mag and get this early) PS Plus members can also get the following discounts until September 7:

- 20% off Splinter Cell HD
- 10% off Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow HD
- Free theme with purchase of Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory
- 15% off Worms 2: Armageddon Forts pack
- 15% off Worms 2: Armageddon Puzzle pack







#### MASSIVE ATTACK -ATLAS AIR

This dreamy, syncopated synth tune has a mental rabbit loping across a polygon landscape. Cool game concept



#### THE CHEMICAL BROTHERS -SALMON DANCE

Talking fish give out the facts of life. Informational, educational, hilarious.



#### JUNIOR SENIOR - MOVE YOUR FEET

Another animal features; this time a squirrel causes destruction but ultimately reaching his comeuppance

VidZone is the largest online music video VOD service in the world, and it's available *free* on PS3. Download the vidzone application and you'll have access to over 13.000 music videos at the push of a button!



# PlayStation<sub>®</sub>Network

# ESSENTIAL DOWNLOADS



# EL SHADDAI:

Following in the path blazed by Dante's Inferno and Darksiders is another game that riffs on Biblical texts. It's hauntingly sparse, and you need to experiment with the way you hit the attack button.



#### M LIMBO

Originally on PC and Another Platform, you take control of a boy who wakes up in a forest and needs to find a way out past the giant spiders. Yeah, it's short, but it's remarkably thoughtful and occasionally breathtaking.



# GALAGA LEGIONS DX

This is the to the original Galaga what Pac-Man CE DX is to the original dot eater. Utterly mental but figure out its patterns and you'll be hooked. It's already putting next issue in jeopardy.



# MDIRT 3 GYMKHANA MINI

Completely insane but fantastic for taking on the Fiesta in multiplayer, on account of its more compact frame. It's very affordable – in fact, you could say it's dirt cheap.



# DRIVER SAN FRAN MULTIPLAYER

Seen the review on page 68 and still not convinced? Okay. This multi demo features two modes that had us swearing loudly at each other – Tag and Trailblazer.

# WHAT IS PSN?

The PlayStation Network (PSN) is free to join and free to play. No subscription is required to play online. You'll be able to communicate with friends, access the PlayStation Store and download demos, add-ons, trailers, PSN games, PSone classics and blockbuster movies!



#### TROPHY LIVES

You love games so much you may as well be hitched to them. Here's what you did to get your beloved trophies.



Daryl Andrew Noack Game: Prototype Trophy: Platinum



The last boss on the hardest difficulty made

all the frustration worth it, as it was my very first Platinum Trophy.



Jeremy Szal Game: Final Fantasy XIII Trophy: Platinum



200+ hour grind, needing a perfect rating in 64 side

missions, and also to kill the toughest enemies in the game over and over.



Michael Napper Game: Midnight Club LA Trophy: Silver



It was the trophy for driving 5000 miles, and I

say this is because this Trophy was the last one I needed for the Platinum. GENRE: RPG RELEASE: NOW DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS DEVELOPER: OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT PLAYERS: 1 RRP: \$19.95

# DLC >

# Fallout: New Vegas - Old World Blues

Welcome to The Scary Door

iven the semi serious tone of the previous batches of downloadable content for Fallout: New Vegas, (Dead Money and Honest Hearts) this latest addition, Old World Blues, comes as a welcome and humorous respite from its brethren with its tongue firmly planted in its cheek and a nod to 1950s styled science-fiction.

With a plotline that could have been ripped straight from the classic TV show The Twilight Zone, after investigating a defunct movie drive-in you find yourself transported to a strange encapsulated mountain that resembles a mad scientist's playground. Some of the world's greatest minds are trapped within and entreated you to perform a few tasks on their behalf. When we say their minds are trapped we mean it – literally. They've abandoned

their bodies and exist as brain matter only, trapped within robotic bodies.

It appears one of their former colleagues has gone rogue and it's up to you to defeat his horde of lobotomised human soldiers, nightstalkers, robot sentries and robo-scorpions and return this facility to some semblance of normality.

You're not doing it out of the goodness of your heart either. Your "allies" have taken a few things dear to you, namely your brain, heart and spinal column and if you ever wish to become whole again, you must jump through their hoops and complete the missions they've charged you with.

As you can tell, it's a beyond ludicrous premise and is populated by some of the quirkiest and funniest characters





in New Vegas. The combat is tough as enemies tend to swarm and the area is curiously deficient of stimpaks, so you'll need to stock up on Nuka-cola and Sunset Sarsaparilla for an extra health boost. As with all DLC, you can't bring any companions with you. You can, however bring all your kit (a first for New Vegas DLC) so we highly recommend picking your favourite weapons and stocking up on stimpaks and ammo before taking Old World Blues for a spin.

### VERDICT

Old World Blues is easily the best value for money and most challenging DLC yet for Fallout: New Vegas and a downright laugh riot at times. If you've been looking for an excuse to revisit the Mojave, you've just found it.





# PlayStation<sub>®</sub>Network

# BEST GAMES TO PLAY ONLINE



CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS

DEVALOPER: TREYARCH
PLAYERS: 1-16
Take MW2 and add in some
insanely addictive contracts
and inventive modes in the
multiplayer proper. However, we
especially like playing Zombies
with a skilled compatriot.



# RED DEAD REDEMPTION

DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR SAN DIESO PLAYERS: 1-16
The connection issues that bothered us are well and truly fixed, so there's no excuse not to jump on, form a posse and start hunting for challengers. Much better as a co-op experience.



# SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV

DEVELOPER: CAPCOM PLAYERS: 1-4 It's like being in the a

It's like being in the arcades (remember those?) when you had a bunch of lads and lasses hanging around, marvelling at your quarter-circle technique. Champagne gaming.



#### FIFA 11 DEVELOPER: EA SPORTS

Shooters aren't the only games that need explicit tactics, and the beautiful game is remarkably brilliant with 11 versus 11 matches It's still as compelling and smooth as last year's effort.

Get on it right now.



#### BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY 2 DEVELOPER: DICE PLAYERS: 1-16

You'll be won over by the chaotic destruction and storming in to an enemy base on the back of a quad bike. You'll stay for the tactics. Team matches have little



#### **BLAST FROM THE PAST**

# The coolest Easter egg ever?

Great Scott! *Driver: San Francisco* turns back the clock!

We didn't find the training level at the beginning of the original *Driver* particularly difficult, but it's actually the reason a lot of people never made it to the first level of the game. In the ultimate bit of *Driver* fan service Reflections has reimagined this infamous level and included it as a hidden bonus in *Driver: San Francisco*.

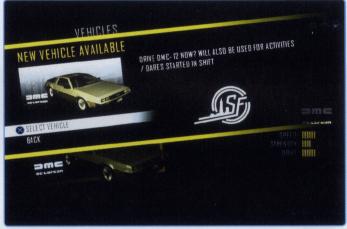
Here's how to get it!



### STEP 1 Unlock it



1 ► Head to your nearest garage; it doesn't matter which one as long as you've unlocked the DeLorean DMC-12 for purchase.



2 ► Scroll down to DMC, buy it and select it. When you leave the garage you'll be driving it.



**3** ► If you haven't already guessed it, you need to get this baby up to 88 miles per hour (although when we tested it we were doing over 100mph when the Easter Egg unlocked). Just floor it until it happens.



**4** ▶ Bam, done. You'll be thrust into shift mode and told you've just discovered something special. All you need to do now is shift back to the garage, head to your special challenges and give it a go.

### STEP 2 Enjoy it!



1 ▶ Don't worry, it's not too tricky once you've mastered the handling model. You'll break one minute easy!



2 Give it the beans while you've got your finger on the handbrake. Release the handbrake for the BURNOUT.



3 ► Floor it until you hit 60mph for SPEED and slam on the anchors so you don't hit the wall. Keep the car straight.



4 ▶ You'll pull up a few metres from the wall and get BRAKE. Keep the brake held and allow the car to begin reversing.



**5** ▶ Get it up to 40mph or so and wrench the wheel in your favourite direction to bring the nose around.



6 Give a handbrake a quick vank as vou're sliding and you'll get both the REVERSE 180 and the HANDBRAKE TURN.



7 ▶ Choose whichever row of supports you're facing and hook around one of the end ones.



8 You need to weave up and back for SLALOM. Watch out for any parked cars!



9 > You should be able to peel out of your slalom and into a LAP.



10 ► Clockwise or counter clockwise, it doesn't really matter, just make it fast and faultless.



11 Plunge back into the centre for a 360 SPIN and you'll be apples.



12 ▶ Done! How do you rate against the rest of the world?



#### Inspired

The garage level is actually a riff on a similar scene from the 1978 crime film The Driver, directed by Walter Hill and starring Ryan O'Neal and Bruce Dern. When we chatted to series creator Martin Edmondson a few months back he revealed The Driver is the first film he was taken to as a kid. In the film scene, the Driver proves his precise skills behind the wheel by systematically destroying a 1969 Mercedes-Benz 280 S by hooning around a parking garage, but while keeping the car in good enough condition to remain running. Edmondson also revealed at the time that they had the car from The Driver, but this Merc does not appear in his game. He may have been referring to the Chevy C-10 or Pontiac Trans-Am that also appear in the film (they can be found in a movie challenge called 'Driven' inspired by The Driver).

# New releases on DVD & Blu-ray

MUST WATCH

# Star Wars: The Complete Saga

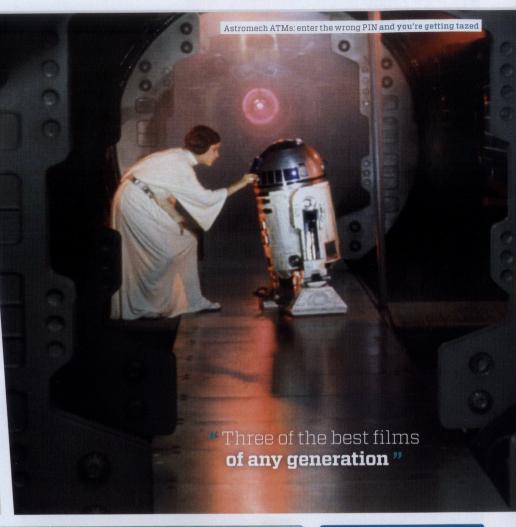
DIRECTOR: GEORGE LUCAS CAST: MARK HAMILL, HARRISON FORD, CARRIE FISHER, ALEC GUINNESS, BILLY DEE WILLIAMS, FRANK OZ, ANTHONY DANIELS AVAILABLE ON: BLU-RAY

long time ago, in a Cineplex far, far away the world was wowed off its Lefeet with one of the greatest sci-fi experiences ever created. 34 years later this sprawling space opera is being preserved to digital perfection in the Blu-ray format in one of three packs: prequels, original trilogy or the whole shebang together. Each film is presented on one Blu-ray disc each, plus the "complete pack" comes with three bonus discs. This means, along with three of the best films of any generation (and three passable ones), you'll get 40 hours of in-depth bonus features, including never-before-seen deleted and alternate scenes. A powerful pack this is. Acquire it, you must.

Watch this if you wrote 'Jedi' in the census

#### Verdict

Every scene is already scorched into your mind like a lightsaber mark. But this is one helluva good pack.





DIRECTOR: RICHARD BERRY CAST: JEAN RENO, KAD MERAD AVAILABLE (RENT) \$5.99 (OWN) \$24.99, 1422MB (SD)

2 Bullets (released in France as L'immortel) is a French film featuring Jean Reno (The Professional, Ronin, er, Onimusha 3) in the lead role.

Charly Mattei has turned his back on his outlaw past. He was once a feared but fair kingpin in the criminal underworld – women, kids, cops and drug were off limits – but for three years he has led a peaceful life and devoted himself to his wife and two children. However, his history comes back to haunt him when he's ambushed in a parking lot and left for dead with 22 bullets in his body. Against all

odds he survives, but he does not react.

Of course, spilled blood never dries and when his enemies turn their attention to those closest to him his revenge is swift and merciless.

Verdict Well executed. Highly recommended for fans of hard-nosed European action-thrillers like Taken.

### PlayStation. Store

# TOP TEN Movies on Demand



- 1 Just Go With It Sony
- Hop Universal
- Rango Paramount
- The Adjustment Bureau Universal
- **Conviction** Fox 5
- Hall Pass Warner Bros.
- I Am Number Four Touchstone
- The Next Three Days 8 Roadshow
- The Fighter Roadshow 9
- **Never Let Me Go Fox**

Now available to rent or own on PlayStation Store & The PlayStation Network Video Store offers hundreds of titles available to rent or own at the click of a button!



# Battle: Los Angeles...

DIRECTOR: JONATHAN LIEBESMAN CAST: AARON ECKHART, MICHELLE RODRIGUEZ, BRIDGET MOYNAHAN, LUCAS TILL, RAMON RODRIGUEZ, MICHAEL PEÑA, NOEL FISHER AVAILABLE ON: BLU-RAY, DVD

s regular frequenters of Los Angeles, nothing would please us more than watching aliens tear it a new one. Unfortunately, thanks to some seriously quakey camera work, we often didn't see as much of that destruction as we should. The CGI and action is relatively solid when it isn't marred by this effect, what really weighs this down is the cheeseball dialogue and tired old war clichés. Some of the solemn scenes wind up being hilarious because of it. Battle: Los Angeles is essentially the Independence Day of this decade. That said, if you can check your brain at the door it's an okay rental.

Watch this if you like Independence Day

**Verdict** You'll be force-fed enough American pie and Semper Fi to make you queasy.





# Insidious<sub>(M)</sub>

DIRECTOR: JAMES WAN CAST: PATRICK WILSON, ROSE BYRNE, TY SIMPKINS, LIN SHAYE, LEIGH WHANNELL, ANGUS SAMPSON, BARBARA HERSHEY AVAILABLE ON: BIUI-RAY, DVD

odern day veterans of the horror scene (James Wan and Leigh Whannell from SAW and Paranormal Activity writer/director Oren Peli) team up to make another haunted house tale that's loaded with clichés but still remains a very successful fright fest.

A young family move into their new home, but after a door opens by itself and one of their children falls off a ladder in the attic sending him into a coma, Dad Josh (Wilson) moves the family again thinking the house is haunted. Turns out it's more likely it's the family that's haunted.

Cue creaky doors and floors (snore) with a few clever tricks here and there. Rose Byrne rises above making this watchable.

Watch this if you like Paranormal Activity

**Verdict** Not particularly scary. The soundtrack of squeaks gives things away, but still entertaining.





# Scarface (R18+)

DIRECTOR: BRIAN DE PALMA CAST: AL PACINO, STEVEN BAUER, MICHELLE PFEIFFER, MARY ELIZABETH MASTRANTONIO, ROBERT LOGGIA AVAILABLE ON: BLUI-RAY

hen *Scarface* was first unleashed it earned the hell out of its R-rating. So much so, a few critics thought that even for an action drama it was way over the top. But for many others, who had done a kilo of Peruvian blow, this was a documentary.

Tony Montana is an absolutely mesmerizing character and the details of his "bad guys never win (but they do get to buy a tiger) drug baron career" is the stuff of legend. Even if you've never watched this, you're probably familiar with it already; Rockstar practically remade it with *GTA: Vice City*.

Scarface is every bit a perennial classic, a must watch film that is eminently quotable. In it Al Pacino gave us, "Say hello to my little friend", a line heard in bedrooms all around the world. Sad, but true.

Watch this if you like watching Al Pacino swear a lot

**Verdict** A gold mine of action, gangsters and all-time dialogue. Witness the '80s at its gaudiest.





# Drive Angry (R18+)

DIRECTOR: PATRICK LUSSIER CAST: NICOLAS CAGE, AMBER HEARD, KATY MIXON, BILLY BURKE, DAVID MORSE, WILLIAM FICHTNER AVAILABLE ON: BLU-RAY/DVD

icolas Cage is John Milton, a hardened felon who has broken out of hell for one last chance at redemption. Jonah King, the leader of a Satanic cult, has murdered Milton's daughter and kidnapped her baby. In three days, King and his followers will sacrifice the child at midnight. Bent on stopping them Milton must track them down, with the help of a waitress named Piper he rescues from her brutal fiancé and some of Detroit's finest muscle, before it's too late.

It falters a bit after a strong start but it's worth watching for Amber Heard alone who (in real life) is bisexual and owns a .357 Magnum and drives a 1968 Ford Mustang. We're in love.

Watch this if you like Machete

**Verdict** Revenge porn in a V8 coupe. Not as clever as *Machete* but fun to watch.





# Your Highness (MAIS+)

DIRECTOR: DAVID GORDON CAST: DANNY MCBRIDE, JAMES FRANCO, NATALIE PORTMAN, ZOOEY DESCHANEL, JUSTIN THEROUX AVAILABLE ON: BLU-RAY/DVD

hadeous (McBride) and Fabious (Franco) are the sons of King Tallious. They are both warriors, but Fabious is dashing and skilled whereas Thadeous is lazy and rubbish.

In order to celebrate his latest victory, Fabious decides to marry his virgin girlfriend Belladonna (Deschanel), but the ceremony is interrupted by the arrival of the evil sorcerer Leezar (Justin Theroux), who kidnapps Belladona and imprisons her at his dungeon, intending to ravage her when the two Moons converge, impregnating her with a dragon that will allow him to take over King Tallious' kingdom.

Watch this if you like Pineapple Express

**Verdict** Remove the wit of The Princess Bride and replace with cursing. Meh.





# Blitz (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: ELLIOTT LESTER CAST: JASON STATHAM, PADDY CONSIDINE, AIDEN GILLEN AVAILABLE ON: BLU-RAY/DVD

ason Statham heads the cast of *Blitz* as the uncompromising and un-PC Detective Tom "Do I look like the kind of guy who carries a pencil?" Brant, a man who is introduced to viewers while thrashing a bunch of knife-wielding, car-jacking hoodies with a hockey stick.

Brant is teamed with unlikely partner, the clean-cut and gay Porter Nash (Considine), to investigate a series of police murders.

On the trail of a media-hungry cop-killer *Blitz* plays out like a trashy South London reimagining of *Dirty Harry*, and it works pretty well.

It's based on the novel of the same name by Ken Bruen but if you have a fear of books, never fear. At it's heart *Blitz* is still a good, old-fashioned head-kicker.

Watch this if you like Jason Statham

**Verdict** A little rough, but watching Jason Statham do what he does best is always a hoot.

7

# intermission

#### NOW SHOWING

# Captain America: The First Avenger (M)

DIRECTOR: JOE JOHNSTON CAST: CHRIS EVANS, HAYLEY ATWELL, HUGO WEAVING, TOMMY LEE JONES IN CINEMAS: NOW

teve Rogers (Evans) is a weakling, but he's no wimp. It's 1942, and Rogers wants to join the American army so he can do his part. It's not that he's looking for a fight; he just hates bullies.

Fate and determination combine and Rogers becomes part of an experiment to create a new breed of soldier, turning him from a 40-kilos-when-wet shrimp to a beefcake that just won't quit. Getting to the front lines still isn't as simple as he'd wanted it to be, but when he's there he's up against Schmidt (Weaving) who shares Hitler's fascination of the occult. Schmidt, however, treats it as a science and generates horrific results.

We're not sure how many Captain America fans are out there. He's a character that was designed as a piece of American propaganda during World War II, and we can only put the timing of his filmic revival down to Marvel wanting to introduce film goers to Cap for the Avengers movie that's coming out in 2012.

Still, Johnston has crafted a really enjoyable comic book flick with just the right balance of stylised action and realism. Evans is a charming, stoic lead and Weaving draws on *The Matrix*'s Agent Smith and sets his eyebrows to 'maximum evil'. Tommy Lee Jones, however, steals the best comic bits.

By the end, Captain America feels like a movie that you'd happily end up watching accidentally, rather than intentionally choosing to go and see; one that's enjoyable but will evaporate from your consciousness as soon as you step outside the cinema. Sometimes, though, that's all you want.

Watch this if you like Iron Man, Thor





# Rise of the Planet of the Apes ...

DIRECTOR: RUPERT WYATT CAST: JAMES FRANCO, ANDY SERKIS, JOHN LITHGOW, FREIDA PINTO IN CINEMAS: NOW

Andy Serkis has a thing for simians. He's beat his chest as the gigantic King Kong, acted out the scenes as Monkey in Ninja Theory's Enslaved, and now turns one of his best performances as Caesar, an ape born with a genetic advantage.

Rise of is an origin story, completely ignoring the 2001 'Marky' Mark Walhberg remake but happily sitting in parallel to the 1968 original. You don't need to have seen the Charlton Heston flick, though you'll smile at the nods and references to the past.

Will Rodman (Franco) is the unwitting architect of his own demise, rescuing Caesar from the lab he works at when the ape is barely a newborn. Rodman's trying to create a cure for Alzheimer's

though as a side effect his miracle drug ends up making chimps smarter, and Caesar starts to display human qualities – elements that were passed on from his mother.

There's pressure on Rodman from his profitdriven boss to get the drug finished so it can be sold but he has a more personal reason to get it right, since his own father (Lithgow) suffers from the disease. Rodman treads close to being a tragic hero and when the credits roll you won't escape from the irony of what he was trying to do.

The movie, however, belongs to Caesar, who realises his true potential with devastating results when locked up in a chimp big house, culminating in a spine-tingling climax. It helps that the special effects are spot on. Recommended.



# Cowboys & Aliens<sub>(M)</sub>

DIRECTOR: JON FAVREAU CAST: HARRISON FORD, DANIEL CRAIG, OLIVIA WILDE, SAM ROCKWELL IN CINEMAS: NOW

his sounds awesome: Indiana Jones and James Bond team up to fight aliens in the Wild West circa 1875. All right, so it's not actually Jones and Bond, though the grizzled duo of Ford and Craig promise action that'd leap off the screen. They don't quite pull it off to the extent you expect, but *Cowboys & Aliens* is entertaining without being leave-your-brain-at-the-door dumb. Sure, that title sounds a bit derpy-derp but you'll be surprised how brutal and engaging it can be.

Jake Lonergan (Craig) regains consciousness in the desert, not knowing who he is but with a foreign looking device on his wrist. He staggers into the town of Absolution with its cast of familiar archetypes and, after initial resistance from the townsfolk, turns out to be one of the saviours against a horde of invading aliens.

It's loaded with action sequences but it's a tease when it comes to knowing what the hell the aliens are doing with humans. They're on Earth to steal our gold, which is more valuable on their own planet than it is on ours.

The cast and production crew alone make this interesting and, although it stumbles somewhat, this is easily digestible fare.



# ON SALE NOW!

### ABOUT THE INDEX

Check out our handy index of all the PS3 titles we feel you should play (and some you shouldn't). Please note: scores are a reflection of a game's comparitive quality at the time of release and will not change - but the index may be updated as titles age or are superseded by new games.

9

#### ACTION

50 Cent: Blood on the Sand So dumb it's dangerously good. Better than

NEW Captain America: Super Soldier 4 NEXT LEVEL GAMES

Beguilingly awful, from the poor graphics to the will-sapping combat and platforming.

Army of Two: The 40th Day EA MONTREAL Still bone-headed but a lot tighter and more fun than the original *Army of Two*.

UBISOFT MONTREAL If you've got a 3D TV, buy it. If not, it's too derivative to bother

RECOMMENDED Bayonetta 9 PLATINUM GAMES It takes balls to make a game this violent,

sexy and weird.

Stylish but superficial.

Bionic Commando There are some great moments but they're

few and far between. HIGH MOON STUDIOS Great presentation and vibe, samey action.

The Club BIZARRE CREATIONS Original, compulsive and fun.

Damnation BLUE OMEGA ENTERTAINMENT Uninspired level design, broken gameplay.

Dark Void AIRTIGHT GAMES Uninpiring graphics, lacklustre sound and dull, dull combat.



DEAD RISING 2 9

DEVELOPER: BLUE CASTLE GAMES PUBLISHER: THQ PLAYERS: 1-4

"You'll wear a stupid grin pretty much from start to finish and it's a riot in co-op. A must-play. The satisfaction of literally cutting down thousands of zombies with anything you can pick up is its only hook but it works a treat."

Dead to Rights: Retribution 6 VOLATILE GAMES
Fine, but doesn't do enough to stand out.

Needs more dog. Devil May Cry 4 7 CAPCOM Memorable bosses but too much

NEW Earth Defense Force: Insect Armageddon VICIOUS CYCLE SOFTWARE 5 Ugly, repetitive and about 10 years out of date.

DOUBLE HELIX GAMES Likable but limited mech-based combat. Genii: Days of the Blade GAME REPUBLIC Flashy graphics, giant enemy crabs, pisspoor plodding gameplay

RECOMMENDED Ghostbusters: The Video Game
TERMINAL REALITY / THREEWAVE SOFTWARE

Robust, charming and impeccably presented.

Hunted: The Demon's Forge INXILE

A textbook example of 'alright'. Co-op rules.

NEW Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters DOUBLE HELIX GAMES A God of War clone that betrays its canon.

John Woo Presents: Stranglehold Packs frantic Max Payne-lite fun.



JUST CAUSE 2

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DEVELOPER: AVALANCHE STUDIOS PUBLISHER: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS PLAYERS: 1

"Parachutes. Grappling hooks. Stripper zeppelins. This insane action game is dirt cheap as it's now part of the Platinum range."

Kane & Lynch: Dead Men IO INTERACTIVE
A let down. Gets close to greatness before crashing back down.

Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days IO INTERACTIVE Michael Mann/YouTube visuals? Great. The game? Average.

Lost Planet 2 Slim pickings for solo players but multiplayer

Mercenaries 2: World in Flames PANDEMIC STUDIOS Weak in many areas but has fun in spades. The Saboteur does it better, though,

Mobile Suit Gundam: Target in Sight 3 A rubber Godzilla of a title. What a pipe

Ninja Gaiden Sigma

A treasure trove of violent gaming goodness.

8

throughout.

RECOMMENDED Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2

5

A sexy and rock hard title but the gore's

RECOMMENDED Prototype 8 BADICAL ENTERTAINMENT simple superhero kill-fest but a truckload of auilty fun.

Red Faction: Armageddon Brown, corridor-based action. Snore.

RECOMMENDED Red Faction: Guerrilla

The best destruction effects ever, hands down.

Saints Row 2 VOLITION, INC. Puerile, mean-spirited and technically outclassed, if you care

RECOMMENDED SOCOM: Special Forces ZIPPERINTERACTIVE
Great online with Move and a Sharp Shooter, though solo ain't that special.

SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs Confrontation 6 SLANTSIX GAMES A sturdy effort that fails to excite.

Time Crisis: Razing Storm NAMCOBANDAI Simple, short light gun fare. Ignore the new first-person shooter mode, it's awful,

Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2 BED STORM ENTERTAINMENT

A tense, realistic shooter. Cool gadgets. NEW Transformers: Dark of the Moon

HIGH MOON STUDIOS

A near brainless movie tie-in with little merit. Transformers: War for Cybertron

HIGH MOON STIIDIOS Good multiplayer, and that's about it

RECOMMENDED Vanquish PLATINUM GAMES Whip quick third-person thrills. Play it now.

Wanted: Weapons of Fate Designed only to appeal to mentally-

subnormal 11-year-olds. RECOMMENDED Warhawk

INCOGNITO ENTERTAINMENT / SCE SANTA MONICA STUDIO Furiously addictive. Tighter than a bull's arse on fight night.

8 WET Tonnes of grindhouse style, little substance.

Wheelman MIDWAY STUDIOS - NEWCASTLE / TIGON STUDIOS Rubbish low-speed handling and underdone X-Men Origins: Wolverine RAVEN SOFTWARE

A head slicin' chest beater of a slash 'em up.

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#### ACTION-ADVENTURE

3D Dot Game Heroes FROM SOFTWARE
If you pine for the past this should keep you entertained.

Alice: Madness Returns SPICY HORSE Marries great ideas and concepts with

average to awful platforming. RECOMMENDED Assassin's Creed 10

UBISOFT MONTREAL A landmark, though slightly dated now.

RECOMMENDED Assassin's Creed II UBISOFT MONTREAL When everything gels correctly it casually murders its predecessor.

ESSENTIAL Assassin's Creed Brotherhood UBISOFT MONTREAL 10 The pinnacle of the series so far and the multiplayer is outstanding.

RECOMMENDED Batman: Arkham Asylum ROCKSTEADYSTUDIOS Really delivers the goods. Best Batman game ever. Best superhero game full stop.

RECOMMENDED Brütal Legend DOUBLE FINE PRODUCTIONS

Must play. If God gave rock 'n roll to us then it's settled: Tim Schafer is God. Cheap, too.

RECOMMENDED Castlevania: Lords of Shadow MERCURYSTEAM

Easily one of the best games of 2010. Clash of the Titans A piss-poor action game lacking in every way

песомминово Dante's Inferno VISCERAL GAMES Derivative but well-produced and good fun.

RECOMMENDED Darksiders 8 VIGIL GAMES

It'll test your patience but persevere and your satisfaction will swell. RECOMMENDED Dead Space

EA REDWOOD SHORES Super tense. The future of survival horror RECOMMENDED Dead Space 2

VISCERAL GAMES What it loses in isolation it makes up for in storytelling. Still scary.

Demon's Souls 7 FROM SOFTWARE Those looking for an extreme challenge may have met their match.

RECOMMENDED Enslaved NINJA THEORY

A fun platforming romp based on the same classic story as TV's *Monkey* was. 7 Fairytale Fights

PLAYLOGIC GAME FACTORY

Quirky and sadistic but too simplistic. 8 GAME REPUBLIC Original and surprising with moments of

6

The Godfather: The Don's Edition EA REDWOOD SHORES
It made for a decent PS2 game but skip this port. It's not worth it.

#### A bottle of rum

TEAM NIN.IA

Pirates of the Caribbean? More like pirates of the has-been. The majority of pirate activities on the seas occurs just off the coast of Somalia. In the first half of 2011, Somali pirates were responsible for 163 out of 266 attacks that happened globally. In 2010 Somali pirates captured a record 1,181 hostages in exchange for ransom, and amounts usually hit millions of dollars.



backtracking spoils things.

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#### Well what do you N2O?

Nitrous oxide has a diverse amount of applications, from being used in dentistry to being pumped through a motor to make cars go faster. The basic science behind the gas being used in container it cools down significantly. Colder air is denser, allowing more fuel and oxygen to burn, which provides more power to the drive wheels.



The Godfather II EAREDWOOD SHORES

Starts as a decent crime caper but alienates fans of the film. Play Mafia II instead.

ESSENTIAL God of War III

SCE SANTA MONICA STUDIO A showcase. Old-fashioned arse-kicking, astonishing visuals.

RECOMMENDED God of War Collection SCE SANTA MONICA STUDIO / BLUEPOINT

Age has not dimished its impact. Purchase immediately.

Golden Axe: Beast Rider SECRETLEVEL

Destined for the chopping block. No co-op?

**ESSENTIAL** Grand Theft Auto IV ROCKSTARNORTH

The technical scope and scale of GTAIV dwarfs all. Remarkable.

ESSENTIAL Grand Theft Auto: Episodes BOCKSTAR NORTH

Two new single-player campaigns, expanded multiplayer and a vast array of new weapons and vehicles. Explosive shotgun? Yes please.

Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince

EA BRIGHT LIGHT STUDIO Play the first 30 minutes and you've played the whole game.

Heavenly Sword 9 NINJA THEORY

Slick graphics and refined combat. A bit short

RECOMMENDED inFAMOUS SUCKER PUNCH PRODUCTIONS A superpowered take on the urban crimefighting sandbox. Get this and the sequel.

inFAMOUS 2 SUCKER PUNCH PRODUCTIONS

Bigger and better, and the level editor is solid.

LEGO Batman TRAVELLER'S TALES Sound and faithful, but the formula is getting LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4 TRAVELLER'S TALES The most thorough LEGO universe yet.

6

RECOMMENDED LEGO Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures

TRAVELLER'S TALES Happiness and wonder overcame us with this joyous adaptation.

LEGO Pirates of the Caribbean TRAVELLER'S TALES
You should know from the title if you'd like

this or not. It is what it is, and it's okay.

LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars TRAVELLER'S TALES

Bum subject, excellent lightsaber action. Kids should adore it.

Lost: Via Domus UBISOFT MONTREAL

Some solid adventuring, but the voice acting is rubbish.

Majin and the Forsaken Kingdom GAME REPUBLIC

A feel-good romp that's a little old-fashioned. If you can find it cheap grab it for a rainy day.

SKCZECH

6

Its attention to detail, presentation and sound is to be admired.

ESSENTIAL Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS

Yes, it's as much a movie as it is a game but the production values are insane. A titan amongst games. Epic.

Overlord II TRIUMPH STUDIOS

Refined gameplay and more jokes but control quirks persist

Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End 6 EUROCOM

Looks the part but unfortunately it doesn't feel or play the part.

Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands 8 UBISOFT MONTREAL

Worth your time but better swordplay could've really helped.

RECOMMENDED Ratchet & Clank Future: A Crack in Time

INSOMNIACGAMES Reinvigorates the genre without reinventing

RECOMMENDED Ratchet & Clank Future: Tools of Destruction

INSOMNIACGAMES A big, wild, good ol' fashioned adventure



RED DEAD REDEMPTION

DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO PUBLISHER: ROCKSTAR PLAYERS: 1-16

"A sweeping epic that's among the best games we've ever played. We're not lying when we say it's better than GTAIV in a lot of crucial areas. Also, the zombie-themed *Undead* Nightmare DLC is boss."

RECOMMENDED Resident Evil 5

CAPCOM

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A grand, bloody adventure but the inventory system remains bad.

RECOMMENDED The Sahoteur PANDEMIC STUDIOS

Charming and packed with action. Great, unique visual style.

SAW II: Flesh & Blood 6 ZOMBIE INC. Lacks finesse but boasts some decent puzzles.

Shadows of the Damned GRASSHOPPER MANUFACTURE Full of dick jokes and so-so gameplay

Silent Hill Homecoming DOUBLE HELIX GAMES New combat system is good, but lacks the

cerebral chills Sonic the Hedgehog

SONIC TEAM There are cheaper ways to get a spare Blurav case.

Sonic Unleashed Hey! It's the least awful Sonic game in years!

Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions

Looks great – but why have we gone back to swinging from invisible hooks in the sky?

Spider-Man: Web of Shadows TREYARCH / SHABA GAMES Swift and tidy but not exactly deep. Star Wars: The Force Unleashed

Fails to use its idea to maximum effect.

Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II

Gets a point-and-a-bit for hour that it is long Technically superior but still rough.

RECOMMENDED Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Double Agent UBISOFT SHANGHAI Obsessive and gripping, online and off.

Tov Story 3 AVALANCHE SOFTWARE Cute, simple, and charming as hell,

ESSENTIAL Uncharted: Drake's Fortune 10 NAUGHTY DOG

Awesome plot, awesome graphics, awesome action. This owns.

ESSENTIAL Uncharted 2: Among

10 NAUGHTYDOG This is the reason Hollywood is so worried about videogames.

Viking: Battle for Asgard THE CREATIVE ASSEMBLY Slow attacks and weak visuals but it has its

RECOMMENDED Yakuza 4 CS1 TEAM One for the fans, but it's very refreshing.

**ADVENTURE** 

RECOMMENDED Heavy Rain QUANTIC DREAM

Not quite a revolution but very clever and very well-crafted.



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L.A. NOIRE

**DEVELOPER: TEAM BONDI** PUBLISHER: ROCKSTAR PLAYERS: 1

"The game world itself is the most detailed we've ever seen. If Team Bondi's Los Angeles was a skirt she'd be a blonde. A blonde to make a bishop kick a hole in a stained glass window. The patient mix of slow-paced adventure gaming and well-executed open world action is hugely satisfying."

Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust TEAM17 SOFTWARE An amazing new low for this generation.



# THE BEST PSone CLASSICS ON PlayStation. Store 8



**FINAL FANTASY VII** 

The RPG upon which all other RPGs are generally judged, Final Fantasy VII is a modern classic and a worthy part of every credible videogame library.



DRIVER

DEVELOPER: REFLECTIONS INTERACTIVE PLAYERS: 1 The original *Driver* hit PlayStation like a blast of fresh air. Hectic car chases through 3D cities may old-hat now but when *Driver* debuted



**CRASH BANDICOOT 3:** WARPED

DEVELOPER: NAUGHTY DOG PLAYERS: 1

The best platformer on any PlayStation. As far as old-school



SYPHON FILTER

it again and tell us this awesome series doesn't deserve a PS3



MEDIEVIL

**DEVELOPER:** SCE STUDI CAMBRIDGE **PLAYERS:** 1 Speaking of games that deserve a PS3 comeback, where's Sir Dan? Fantasy hack 'n slash meets the supernatural, *MediEvil* still does it



inhouse

FEATURED STUDIO OF THE MONTH

# Obsidian Entertainment

LOCATION: SANTA ANA, CALIFORNIA, USA FOUNDED: 2003 BEST KNOWN FOR: FALLOUT: NEW VEGAS

eargus Urquhart is the tip of the spear at Obsidian, another studio that's comfortably coding RPGs and aiming high. Urquhart founded the studio out of the ashes of developer and publisher Black Isle Studios, which was part of Interplay. As an aside, that parent company created the Fallout franchise and, although Interplay is back up and running, the rights to that series have been sold to Bethesda.

When some of the core staff were working at Black Isle their speciality was RPGs and it's a genre they're sticking with – though Urquhart acknowledges there isn't just one type of RPG.

"I got to make a bunch of different types of games, as other people at Obsidian did, earlier in my career and I found that making RPGs is what I love to do," he says. "I also think that the RPG genre has such a range that there are always new things to do within it, from [shooters] like Fallout, to JPRGs like Final Fantasy, the more action RPGs like Dungeon Siege and, of course, the epic story-based RPGs like Mass Effect. Each one of them is an RPG, but they are also very different from one another — which means you get to be creative in entirely different ways when making them."

Obsidian should know. Its heritage is forged in RPGs that the PC crowd revere; the original Fallout games, Icewind Dale, and Neverwinter Nights II. However, its first title as Obsidian, Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic II on Xbox cemented its position in the gaming landscape. All of its games reflect the studio's desire to produce something that gives gamers the chance to enjoy something that has great depth of experience. However, Urquart feels it can backfire for the studio as well.

"We try to do so much in the time we are given, we have been known to ship games that have had some glitches and bugs in them. It's tough though, when you have the opportunity to make sequels to such great games as... Fallout 3, but need to do it in much shorter time frames than the original development teams had... you want to make them as big or bigger than the original products. I think we did a better job of controlling ourselves and made Dungeon Siege III a very polished game within the time and budget we were given."

#### FIGHTING

Battle Fantasia

ARC SYSTEM WORKS
A nice curiousity but, seriously, get Super
Street Fighter IV.

RECOMMENDED BlazBlue:

Continuum Shift

Still wilder, wackier and noisier than anything

FaceBreaker EACANADA

Great look but very unbalanced.

The Fight: Lights Out

COLDWOOD INTERACTIVE
The Move controls don't feel as organic as we'd hoped they would. Sorry Danny Trejo.

The King of Fighters XII SNK PLAYMORE

Grey, old and well beyond retirement. Irredeemable..

RECOMMENDED Marvel vs. Capcom 3

CAPCOM

Fast, fun and gorgeous. Features Haggar.

RETHERREALM

Technically not available in Aus, it's a sterling return to form for the series. Funny, too.

RECOMMENDED Soulcalibur IV

NAMCOBANDAI Phenomenal, but will let down those expecting a revolution.



#### SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV

DEVELOPER: CAPCOM/DIMPS
PUBLISHER: THO PLAYERS: 1-2

"With the 'vanilla' versions vibrant look, online mode and pristine gameplay – but with a stack of new characters, all unlocked and at a bargain price – Super Street Fighter IV belongs in everyone's collection."

NEW Super Street Fighter IV Arcade Edition

CAPCOM

For first time purchasers only.

RECOMMENDED Tekken 6

NAMCOBANDAI

Easy to play, with the biggest roster ever.

Feels a bit old, though.

TNA Impact!

MIDWAY STUDIOS - LOS ANGELES Arcade-style biff but needs more content. 6

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WWE Legends of WrestleMania

YUKE'S Gets by on retro charm but feels absolutely ancient.

WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010

YUKE'S
If the soap-drama of the WWE's your thing,
welcome to nirvana.

#### FLIGHT

7

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Apache: Air Assault

GAIJIN ENTERTAINMENT Hardcore chopper sim with impressive detail but lacks variety. Good online, though.

Blazing Angels: Squadrons of WWII 7

UBISOFT ROMANIA
A simple aerial blaster. Flawed but fun

Blazing Angels 2: Secret Missions of

Blazing Angels 2: Secret Missions of WWII

UBISOFT ROMANIA

Solid, varied, but not quite the ace of aces.

Heroes Over Europe

TRANSMISSION GAMES
A little rough but not bad. *IL-2* is much better,



#### IL-2 STURMOVIK: BIRDS OF PREY

DEVELOPER: GAIJIN ENTERTAINMENT PUBLISHER: AFA PLAYERS: 1-16

"Head turning visuals, astonishing attention to detail, brilliant sound effects and stacks of ratta-tat action all combine in this truly surprisingly awesome aerial combat game. To be honest it's the best flight game we've

Lair FACTOR 5

ever played."

10

FACTURE
It feels rushed and unfinished. Deeply

disappointing.

Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X.

UBISOFT ROMANIA
Tight and accessible but a bit sterile.

RECOMMENDED Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2 8
UBISOFT ROMANIA

A top gun successor. More detail, better mission design.

# THE BEST **PSP** GAMES



#### GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY STORIES

**DEVELOPER:** ROCKSTAR LEED **PLAYERS:** 1-6 This is about as remarkable

as gaming gets on a handheld console. A fully-fledged 3D GTA, just like the PS2 versions, on PSP – and it feels absolutely brilliant. Also? Phil Collins is in it. No, we're totally serious.



#### MONSTER HUNTER FREEDOM UNITE DEVELOPER: CAPCOM

PLAYERS: 1-4

Monster Hunter is a true system seller in its native Japan and it deserves that sort of awareness here. It's an adventure game to lose your life to,rewarding you i



# WIPEOUT PULSE DEVELOPER: SCE LIVERPOOL PLAYERS: 1-8

Beautiful and weighted just right, it's a futurist's wet dream. There's a reason Wipeout just works – and this is proof. Depending on which day of the week you ask us this just pips the likes of Burnout Legends and Gran Turismo for best racing game on PSP.



#### METAL GEAR SOLID: PEACE WALKER

DEVELOPER: KOJIMA PRODUCTION PLAYERS: 1-6

A proper, well-produced and thought-out Metal Gear, this is a must-have. The story's great and the action is totally addictive. We can't stress it enough: buy this game, and a PSP if you must. This a title that no gamer should miss.



#### GOD OF WAR: GHOST OF SPARTA DEVELOPER: READY AT DAWN

Stupidly better than the already excellent Chains of Olympus, this still has fantastic graphics and tighter-than-hades gameplay. If you're a fan of the series, this is a crucial part of the saga you really shouldn't miss.

#### MUSIC

AC/DC Live: Rock Band Track Pack Bare-bones stuff but the music is worth it.

Fully exportable.

Band Hero NEVERSOFT

Robust but the over-zealous censorship grates a lot.

BROOMWANDAD The Beatles: Bock Band HARMONIX

Outstanding. This is a tribute like no other.

BECOMMENDED D.I Hero 9 FREESTYLEGAMES Tough to write off as a gimmick.

RECOMMENDED DJ Hero 2 9 FREESTYLEGAMES Some great improvments and some excellent, unique mixes.

RECOMMENDED Green Day: Rock Band HARMONIX

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Very good. Up there with The Beatles: Rock Band and Guitar Hero: Metallica.

Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock NEVERSOFT The last GH with a mostly decent soundtrack.

Guitar Hero World Tour Good, but missing crucial elements that make

Rock Band better

NEVERSOFT Improving, but the hipster tracklist is a dud.

RECOMMENDED Guitar Hero: Metallica NEVERSOFT
The best in the series since Guitar Hero III.

Guitar Hero: Greatest Hits BEENOX Great past GH tracks with full band support. Seriously though, why wasn't it just DLC?

Guitar Hero: Van Halen UNDERGROUND DEVELOPMENT

Only buy this cheap: \$90 is an insult. USA GH5 buyers got it as a free bonus.

Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock NEVERSOFT Functional, but it just isn't evolving at the same rate as its peers.

LEGO Rock Band HARMONIX/TRAVELLER'S TALES Cute. Fewer tracks than we'd like though.

Michael Jackson The Experience UBISOFT MONTREAL

Better with mates but feels cheap ESSENTIAL Bock Band 10 HARMONIX

The best party game ever, until the sequels. ESSENTIAL Rock Band 2 10

HARMONIX The best music game series around.

RECOMMENDED Rock Band 3 9 HARMONIX Improvements to the interface abound, but it's only as good as your existing DLC library.

8 SCELONDONSTUDIO Will last as long as the PS3 with so much DLC.

#### PARTY

JAPAN STUDIO A serious misstep. An on-rails shooter where the monkeys run towards you? Pass.

7 SCE LONDON STUDIO Harmless fun but pointless for adults

Hail to the Chimp 3 WIDELOAD GAMES Want to lose friends? Play this with them.

3 Kung Fu Rider JAPANSTUDIO

Waggle-based rubbish. A terrible example of a Move game.

PlayStation Move Heroes 7 NIHILISTIC SOFTWARE One for undemanding kids. Fun but bland

6 The Shoot COHORTSTUDIOS A good Move rail shooter. Cool presentation. It won't blow your skirt up forever, though.

RECOMMENDED Sports Champions ZINDAGIGAMES Despite a few quirks this is the must-have Move title.

7 BLITZ GAME STUDIOS Imperfect yet hilarious movie karaoke title.

#### PUZZLE/PLATFORMER

RECOMMENDED de Blob 2 BLUE TONGUE ENTERTAINMENT A surprisingly fun and fresh bunch of gems

RECOMMENDED Katamari Forever 8 NAMCOBANDAL Joyfullness, digitally realised. Infectious.

RECOMMENDED LittleBigPlanet 2 MEDIA MOLECULE Like the original it's innovative and neverending. Improves upon an amazing product.

BROWNIANDED The Sly Collection SUCKER PUNCH PRODUCTIONS A surprisingly fun and fresh bunch of gems.

#### RACING

Blur 7 BIZARRE CREATIONS A race to power-ups rather than a racer with

power-ups. RECOMMENDED Burnout Paradise CRITERION GAMES Stunning and sharp but we miss the

dedicated Crash Mode. AVALANCHE SOFTWARE

Kids will love this solid kart racer.

9 CODEMASTERS Plenty of real rally action, unlike its sequel.

Colin McRae: DiRT 2 7 CODEMASTERS Drives fine but it's style over substance here

RECOMMENDED DIRT 3 CODEMASTERS

A welcome return to form. Great car roster, awesome handling, incredible sound. The gymkhana events are a highlight.



#### **GRAN TURISMO 5**

DEVELOPER: POLYPHONY DIGITAL PUBLISHER: SONY PLAYERS: 1-16

"GT5 feels familiar, and is still an RPG masquerading as a racing game. It looks stunning with class-leading lighting effects and exceptionally modelled premium cars, and with a G27 wheel it feels incredible. We just wish that there were some more recent cars."

ASOBO STUDIOS Huge, but bugged, boring and undercooked.

#### Exo-lent



Alcatraz from Crysis 2 have each worn an exoskeleton: an outer layer of metal that enhances their natural abilities to run faster, withstand more damage or sport a radical red eye. General Electric made one of the earliest exoskeletons in the 1960s. Called the Hardiman, it allowed a person to lift 680kg, though the suit itself weighed just as much. It was not a success.

Metal Gear Solid's Gray Fox along with

RECOMMENDED F12010 9 CODEMASTERS A white-knuckle racer and an authentic title Heaps better with a Logitech wheel.

Midnight Club: Los Angeles ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO Visually weak, but sprawling and busy locale.

RECOMMENDED ModNation Racers 9 UNITED FRONT GAMES An incredible package. Creating is even more fun than racing.

6 MotoGP 10/11 MONUMENTAL GAMES Dull presentation and crap controls wreck it.

MotorStorm 10 EVOLUTION STUDIOS Fast, hard and dirty. Things have come on a lot since 2007 though.

MotorStorm: Pacific Rift EVOLUTION STUDIOS Boasts splitscreen but visually it hasn't come on far enough.

MotorStorm Apocalypse EVOLUTION STUDIOS

The new locale lacks a little charm but the racing is as fast and frantic as ever.

MX vs. ATV Alive 5 RAINBOW STUDIOS A step backwards for a series that peaked on PS2 and has gotten lamer since

RECOMMENDED Need for Speed Hot Pursuit 9 CRITERION GAMES Smooth, compelling and absolutely beautiful arcade racing.

Nail'd TECHLAND Fun knockabout ATV arcade racer that

needed a bit more dev time.

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RECOMMENDED SHIFT 2: Unleashed SLIGHTLY MAD STUDIOS Incredible sense of speed, frantic racing and plenty of depth. Tops even *GT5* in many crucial areas. Features Mount Panorama.

RECOMMENDED Pure BLACK ROCK STUDIOS One of the best arcade racers on the market.

RECOMMENDED Race Driver: GRID CODEMASTERS A born-to-rage racing rebel. Good but lacks the Race Driver vintage, despite the name.

MILESTONE Fairly similar to the last one, but with a new Challenge mode and tweaked handling.

SEGA RACING STUDIO Familiar, old-school arcade fun, though it feels tired in 2011.

RECOMMENDED Split/Second BLACK ROCK STUDIO Doesn't feel as sharp as Burnout but it's a true challenger.

SuperCar Challenge Admirable effort but feels a little bland

MILESTONE An improvement but it's still more shallow than it thinks it is.

Superstars V8: Next Challenge

Test Drive Unlimited 2

robust driving model.

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EDENGAMES Massive and ambitious but the cars handle like go-karts in glue. Second-rate visuals, too. Playable but disappointing.

RECOMMENDED WRC MILESTONE Drab graphics, imperfect sound, but a joyfully

**RPG/ACTION RPG** 

Alpha Protocol 5 OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT Great concept, poor execution. Also? Worst male lead ever

Ar tonelico Qoga: Knell of Ar Ciel Defiantly old-school JRPG. One for the fans.

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COMPILEHEART Every benchmark of excellence has been missed. Offensive.

DC Universe Online SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT Pretty but shallow, and expensive subs too.

NEW Dungeon Siege III OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT Sluggish combat and an arse-backwards upgrade system. Quite pretty, though.

RECOMMENDED Dragon Age: Origins BIOWARE As long as it is enthralling. Essential for patient fantasy freaks.

RECOMMENDED Dragon Age II 8 BIOWARE Accessible but lacks immersion. One step forward and two steps back from Origins

ESSENTIAL The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion BETHESDA GAME STUDIOS Simply put: awesome.

8 Hyperdimension Neptunia IDEA FACTORY A pastiche on modern videogames. Very, very weird JRPG with neat attack strategies.

ESSENTIAL Fallout 3 10 BETHESDA GAME STUDIOS
It's Oblivion in a post-apocalyptic wasteland, and it's utterly brilliant.

RECOMMENDED Fallout: New Vegas 8 OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT A great ride but you've been on it before.

RECOMMENDED Final Fantasy XIII SQUAREENIX Spellbinding graphics and 50+ hours of action

but missing a little magic. Marvel: Ultimate Alliance 2 7

VICARIOUS VISIONS
A compelling romp but the button-mashing play needs updating. 10 ESSENTIAL Mass Effect 2

BIOWARE Astonishingly rich combat-driven sci-fi. An action RPG without peer.

Resonance of Fate Deep, but also wordy, clunky and ugly. 6

Sacred 2: Fallen Angel ASCARON ENTERTAINMENT

Gigantic, but feels very slapped together.

Valkyria Chronicles SEGA WOW

Strategy/RPG heads should not miss this.

White Knight Chronicles II

LEVEL 5/JAPAN STUDIO A JRPG for those who like to grind.

#### SHOOTER

RECOMMENDED Aliens vs. Predator

REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS One of the best movie-inspired titles ever Beyond brutal.

RECOMMENDED Battlefield: Bad Company 8

DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE Destructible environments and humour. Together at last.

RECOMMENDED Battlefield: Bad Company 2

DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE A top-tier shooter with a deeply dedicated online community, but the single-player mischief of the original is M.I.A

RECOMMENDED BioShock

IRRATIONAL GAMES / 2K MARIN Grown-up gaming at its best.

RECOMMENDED BioShock 2 2K MARIN/DIGITAL EXTREMES/2K

Doesn't match the original's plot but the combat has been spiced to near-perfection.

MIDWAY STUDIOS - AUSTIN
A pedestrian shooter that needed more time in the lab



#### BORDERLANDS

DEVELOPER: GEARBOX SOFTWARE PUBLISHER: 2K PLAYERS: 1-4

"Borderlands starts out great and only gets better. It takes the best elements from RPGs and fuses them to a superb shooter. The result: the most rewarding co-op to date, and there's a stack of great DLC for it too. Great value."

RECOMMENDED Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway

GEARBOX SOFTWARE

The most authentic WWII shooter ever made. and certainly the most realistic.

Brink

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SPLASHDAMAGE

Runs a good online race. Faceplants as a solo experience.

Bulletstorm PEOPLE CAN FLY

Inventive but saves the best stuff for the final couple of hours. Graphically struggles, too

ESSENTIAL Call of Duty 4: Modern

INFINITY WARD

It's still relentlessly exciting.

ESSENTIAL Modern Warfare 2 INFINITY WARD
Like three games stuffed into one. We still

love the co-op Spec Ops mode.

RECOMMENDED Call of Duty: Black Ops TREYARCH

A generous package with great solo and online play. The presentation's excellent too.

ESSENTIAL Call of Duty: World at War 10

A class act. War at its worst (and best). Proof you can make a great WWII game set (partially) in the Pacific. Plus, Nazi Zombies.

Call of Juarez: Bound in Blood

A cinematic and action-packed Western shooter that's better than you probably think.

RECOMMENDED The Chronicles of Riddick:

Assault on Dark Athena STARBREEZE STUDIOS / TIGON STUDIOS Moody and fresh. A must play. You don't need to know the movies to enjoy it either.

Condemned 2: Bloodshot MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS

Gripping stuff. We were blown away. Shame the original isn't on PS3.

RECOMMENDED Crysis 2

CRYTEK Diabolically pretty and challenging. A welcome reprieve from the glut of corridor

RECOMMENDED The Darkness

STARBREEZE STUDIOS Stunning, original and gory as hell. Hopefully the sequel rocks this hard.

shooters that demands intelligence and grit.

FEAR

MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS / DAY 1 STUDIOS A chilling ride, but the graphics could've

F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS

An above-average shooter suffering from a lack of imagination.

NEW F.E.A.R. 3

DAY 1 STUDIOS Capable but unspectacular, Also, not scary,

RECOMMENDED Far Cry 2

UBISOFT MONTREAL A technical open-world bell-ringer but the travel time will grate.

FREE RADICAL DESIGN Patchy visuals, tragic level design and dismal Al.

RECOMMENDED Homefront

KAOS STUDIOS Polished but blink-and-you'll-miss-it single player. A fine alternative to CoD multi, though.

ESSENTIAL Killzone 2 **GUERRILLA GAMES** 

Lives up to the hype. Amazing graphics, hectic action.

RECOMMENDED Killzone 3 GUERRILLA GAMES

Epic firefights and an engrossing storyline It's also a winner with Move.

SPARKUNLIMITED

A rushed mess. Terrible

RECOMMENDED MAG ZIPPER INTERACTIVE

Shooter junkies take heed: this is where it's at for online combat.

RECOMMENDED Medal of Honor

DANGER CLOSE / DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE Not sexy but it's a gritty, realistic shooter with great atmosphere.

RECOMMENDED Mirror's Edge

EADIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE

A true original that makes some grand leaps

## The secret ingredient

George A. Romero popularised the myth of the modern zombie in his 1968 film Night of the Living Dead, though zombies had been written into novels way back in 1929. While the bulk of what writers and directors base their zombie creations on comes from Haitian lore, the West African religion of Vodou also mention zombies. From our research, feeding a zombie salt sends them back to their grave. FYI.



Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising 8

CODEMASTERS Authentic but niche. Very unforgiving

RECOMMENDED Operation Flashpoint:

Red River

CODEMASTERS A massive improvement on its predecessor. Fun solo, but co-op over the PSN is awesome

RECOMMENDED The Orange Box

Get it for Portal, keep it for Half-Life 2.

RECOMMENDED Portal 2

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One of the most brilliant games ever.

Quantum of Solace TREYARCH

Has too many faults to be compelling.

RECOMMENDED Resistance: Fall of Man 10 INSOMNIAC GAMES A fantastic launch title with sweet weapons.

RECOMMENDED Resistance 2

INSOMNIACGAMES

Fast, furious and stuffed with action

ZOMBIE STUDIOS / REBELLION

DEVELOPMENTS A fiasco. We tried to like it but it's too short

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BAVENSOFTWARE Had potential but wasn't quite worth the wait.

Sniper: Ghost Warrior

CITY INTERACTIVE
The novelty will be enough for sniper fans. Regular FPS folk won't be able to forgive its sloppy execution.

TimeShift

SABERINTERACTIVE

A solid attempt that doesn't quite reach 88 miles per hour.

RECOMMENDED Tom Clancy's

Rainbow Six: Vegas UBISOFT MONTREAL

Slick, good-looking and utterly engaging.

Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Vegas 2
UBISOFT MONTREAL

Not as good or as cool as the first one

Turning Point: Fall of Liberty

SPARKUNLIMITED

Scrappy throughout. Great concept, bogus execution

### **SPORTS**

than Rugby League Live.

2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa

EACANADA

FIFA 10 with a World Cup facelift. A bit pricey

BIGANT Does a decent job of things and it's better



# THE BEST PSN GAMES ON PlayStation. Store



DEVELOPER: HOTHEAD PLAYERS: 1
A charming platformer that

incorporates one of last decade's most used mechanics – time manipulation – whilst wrapped up in gorgeous graphics. Incredibly addictive and charming, it's made even better when you discover it



PIXELJUNK SHOOTER

navigate your way through various caverns, rescuing any survivors along the way. Of course, there's interesting gameplay mechanics



FLIGHT CONTROL HD

accessible PSN title available. The premise is simply to guide the aircraft on-screen to their respective runways. That's it but you'll be totally hooked. One of the best games to play with PlayStation Move too.



PAC-MAN CE DX DEVELOPER: NAMCO BAN PARTNERS PLAYERS: 1 More than an update, this is a revolution. The 'CE' stands for 'Championship Edition', and is a mash of different maps and modes revolving around guiding Paccers through the dots and



PLANTS VS. ZOMBIES

The smash hit on PC lands on plays beautifully with a controller. You have a variety of plants to defend your end of the lawn while the undead shufle and eat their and actually loaded with braaains



#### The French connection

William Grover-Williams was a racecar driver and, amazingly, a spy for Allied forces during World War II. In his early 20s, in the 1920s, he raced an Indian brand motorcycle before progressing to Grand Prix and the Monte Carlo rally, and was also the chauffer for an Irish portrait painter, William Orpen, and his lover Yvonne Aupica, in France, After Orpen and Aupicq split, Grover-Williams married Aupicg. A game should be made about this guy! Wait, it has: it's called The Saboteur.



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Ashes Cricket 2009

TRANSMISSION GAMES Disappointing, but stick through the ugly for some multiplayer beauty.

Backbreaker NATURALMOTION

Great tech. Worth a look to see euphoria at work in a sports game.

Beijing 2008

EUROCOM Not the worst of its type but far from a game to buy and keep.

EA Sports MMA

EATIBURON Great controls but struggles to be convincing.



FIFA 11

DEVELOPER: EA CANADA PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-22

"While FIFA 12 looms, FIFA 11 remains a bafflingly brilliant update. If you've skipped the last few FIFA updates boost the score by one. Seriously, it's that good. This is the best-selling sports game in the world and it's not hard to see whv."

RECOMMENDED Fight Night Champion

EACANADA

Refined controls, excellent story mode and super-quick gameplay. Near perfect.

International Cricket 2010

TRICKSTAR GAMES Not the most comprehensive cricket game but certainly the best when you're on the pitch.

John Daly's ProStroke Golf GUSTO GAMES

Those looking for a high production value golf game should give this the shaft.

RECOMMENDED NBA 2K11

VISUAL CONCEPTS/KUSH GAMES Hard court high priest Michael Jordan stars in perhaps the best basketball game ever.

RECOMMENDED NBA Jam

EACANADA A faithful and fun update to the '90s classic.

Pro Evolution Soccer 2011

KONAMI Good for a goal fix, still second best overall.

5 Rugby League Live

BIGANT

Get FIFA 11

Not as complete a game as the last one on PS2 and the whack team ratings frustrate. The Melbourne crew at Big Ant did a Isightly better job with AFL Live

Shaun White Skateboarding

UBISOFT MONTREAL

Kudos for the quirky touches but the skating itself is pretty bland.

Shaun White Snowboarding

UBISOFT MONTREAL Lacks the fine touch of realism or the excitement of lunacy.

Skate

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EABLACKBOX

A well-balanced masterpiece and true Tony Hawk killer. Trumped by its sequels.

RECOMMENDED Skate 2

EA BLACK BOX

One of the greatest sports games ever conceived. The controls are flawless, the city is dense and packed with natural lines and the balance is sublime.

RECOMMENDED Skate 3

EABLACKBOX

Better in many ways, although the city isn't as cool as Skate 2.

RECOMMENDED Tiger Woods PGA Tour 12 8

EATIBURON

Great golf game but we don't like the way the day one DLC is teased via the career mode.

Tony Hawk's Project 8

NEVERSOFT

No real reason to revisit this post-Skate at all.

Tony Hawk's Proving Ground

NEVERSOFT Bloated and inconsistent, Pass,

Tony Hawk: RIDE

ROBOMODO Pure frustration made plastic.

RECOMMENDED Top Spin 4

SKCZECH

More accessible than its predecessor with a DualShock, as the Move controls are spotty.

RECOMMENDED UFC Undisputed 2010

YUKE'S

8

The new undisputed baron of sports fighting.

Vancouver 2010

EUROCOM A handful of events that last one afternoon.

RECOMMENDED Virtua Tennis 4

SUMO DIGITAL Superb Move controls and supremely pretty.

STRATEGY

RECOMMENDED Civilization Revolution 8

FIRAXISGAMES Great fun and shockingly addictive

RECOMMENDED BILSE

EUGEN SYSTEMS

Niche but supremely well-crafted strategy. Better with Move, too.

The Sims 3 THE SIMS STUDIO

Waiting to pounce on the right type of gamer.

Stormrise

THE CREATIVE ASSEMBLY A cack-handed, future war mess.

Tom Clancy's EndWar

UBISOFT SHANGHAI Far from a finished product. Works, but it's hardly an essential purchase.

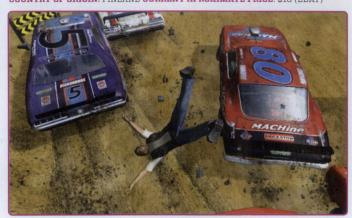
infamous

REVISITING PLAYSTATION CLASSICS

2004:



CONSOLE: PS2 GENRE: RACING DEVELOPER: BUGBEAR ENTERTAINMENT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: FINLAND CURRENT APROXIMATE PRICE: \$10 (EBAY)



latOut is a racer that could've just as easily been called Paddock Bashing Shenanigans, or possibly Fangin' Frank's Trip Through the Windshield. If either of those titles sound like the sort of fun game you can wrap your head around (in this case, a tree), then you're gonna love this.

The premise of FlatOut is simple: using a cavalcade of crappy rust buckets you must shunt and get sideways through rural tracks based in buttchuck nowhere. But while similarly styled games like Burnout 3 are twitch-racers, FlatOut offers sim styled car handling. Also, each car is fitted with an actual driver (and no seatbelts). This makes for chaotically hilarious results, as meteoring into a log pile, or copping a decent T-boning, will ejaculate your driver from his vehicle with a piteous wail.

This is of course where the magic kicks in. Ragdoll physics may be part and parcel of most any modern gaming title today, but back in 2004 watching your soon-to-be-a-corpse cartwheel down the hill, only to lodge in the wheel arch of a competitor, was mind-blowing stuff. This mayhem was enhanced by the fact that each of the 45 tracks was fully destructible. There's something to be said for being able to pull off the sort of short cut strategy that'd earn a high-five from the Blues Brothers.

Though the main course of FlatOut is a demolition racing championship, developer BugBear wisely recognised the appeal of its own seatbelt-less shenanigans. As a result you get access to a dedicated suite of six sadistic mini-games such as darts, bowling and high jump.

The latter is clearly the pick of the litter. You're given three attempts to run a car down a ramp and up another ramp. At this point holding the turbo button initiates a slow-mo 'release angle' meter before your driver is pitched over a 100ft ladder structure. It's a laugh-a-minute time-waster as anything but the most powerful jalopy doesn't have enough speed to get your guy over the ladder. More often than not he (or she) will get thoroughly coat-hangered or clipped into a furious tangle of limbs.

Thankfully, all of this brutality is geared towards a purpose. Money. Rather than having a fleet of stockstandard street racing machines. FlatOut has you studiously upgrading your piece-of-crap car with your ill-gotten moolah. A surprisingly large amount of components can be tweaked in FlatOut and the results of your hardearned flywheel, or supercharger, is always felt while racing in Bugbear's physics-heavy engine.

Unfortunately, the later racing events are also where FlatOut can come unstuck - and not always in a piss-funny way. Although we could never completely confirm it, there seems to be a dash of "catch-up logic" going on. For those of you unfamiliar with the term, it denotes a certain 'rubberbanding' between you and the competition. No matter how much you blitz ahead, one minor mistake is all it takes for your rivals to magically overtake you.

It's a frustration that only really rears its head in the final furlong of races. Even after all these years this is still worth a burl. It's also why BugBear's input is the sole reason we're looking forward to Ridge Racer: Unbounded.

#### **RESTART RACE? YOU BETCHA**

Money makes the world go 'round in FlatOut. Each race tier in the game requires a Bronze, Silver and Gold class car and the 'full outfit' prices for the best ride in each category is \$23,000, \$39,900 and \$79,400 respectively. When you weigh that against the fact that a won race only earns \$1000, FlatOut can be a bit of a grind.

**Next** month

**EXCLUSIVE** 

# Batman Arkham City

FIRST REVIEW! The Dark Knight rises before descending into hell!

# **PLUS**

**Dead Island** 

FIFA 12

**Brothers in Arms:** 

**Furious 4** 

F1 2011

**Dark Souls** 

**Mass Effect 3** 

**Updates** from

gamescom

and much more!

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Disclaimer: OPS will do everything to deliver this content next month but we can't be held at fault if things go awry or scheduled games slip and miss our deadline!





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